Table of Contents

1. basis | introduction
2. allegiances
3. prologue
4. chapter 1
5. chapter 2
6. chapter 3
7. chapter 4
8. chapter 5
9. chapter 6
10. chapter 7
11. chapter 8
12. chapter 9
13. epilogue

basis | introduction

TRIGGER WARNING

this fanfic entails darker themes such as gore, mental abuse, physical abuse, mental illness and topics which may be too harsh for younger viewers. the safety of my readers matters the most to me.

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A/N

hello. i'm lex! from this point forward, you don't have to read this (it may be a little lengthy), but i would really appreciate it if you did.

guys!! mind over matter has been a project i've been planning for months and one i'm extremely excited to start. this story follows zinniapool, the medicine cat during the early days of fallclan, as she realizes a horrifying truth about herself that subjects her to the darkest places of her mind.

i want to clarify that this fanfic can be viewed as a prequel to grim hollow as it is in the same universe, just many moons in the past, though you do **not** have to read grim hollow in order to understand the story being told here. however if you **have** read grim hollow, this may answer some questions you had about it!

i'd also like to mention that this story follows a very non traditional warrior cats plot which i was a little nervous to write about, but my excitement outweighs it. this story falls heavily into the topic of parapsychology, which is the study of psychic phenomenas including mental abilities such as telekinesis and telepathy, though that is only the surface level. if these topics confuse you, i promise you that they'll be explained in a way everyone can understand!

i'm extremely excited for this project and seeing it through, and i hope you guys stick around for the roller coaster of emotions which follow. any criticism is okay, we all make mistakes, just be polite

about it! any and all feedback is appreciated.

allegiances

FallClan

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LEADER
Lightstar
cream-colored bengal tomcat with blue eyes.

DEPUTY
Dimglow
dark brown tabby tomcat with dim yellow eyes.

MEDICINE CATS
Eveningleaf
white-and-gray she-cat with green eyes.
Zinniapool
lilac braided tabby with copper eyes.

WARRIORS
Otterfur ⚞ *apprentice, Copperpaw*
little brown she-cat with green eyes.
Waspwillow
fluffy tortoiseshell she-cat with amber eyes.
Sageflight
gray tabby tomcat with green eyes.
Elysianlily
calico she-cat with amber eyes.
Laurelfrost
grayish-brown tabby tom with a white underbelly and copper eyes.
Sparrowpurr ⚞ *apprentice, Creekpaw*
large russet-colored she-cat with fiery amber eyes.
Lilacpetal
cream-colored bengal tomcat with light green eyes.
Sandcurl
pale beige tomcat with green eyes.
Sootflower

silver bengal she-cat with thick black markings and blue eyes.

Finchfeather

mottled brown and white she-cat with green eyes.

APPRENTICES

Creekpaw

silver bengal tomcat with blue eyes.

Copperpaw

silvery-brown bengal tomcat with green eyes.

QUEEN

Dandelionpath

light cream-tan bengal she-cat with blue eyes.

ELDER

Arumflame

large dark russet she-cat with cream paws and orange-yellow eyes.

OTHERS

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Genesis

an old dark tabby tom who appears black in dim lighting. he has blue eyes.

Revel

brown tabby tomcat with amber eyes.

Salem

a small black tomcat with bright greenish-yellow eyes.

Eden

calico she-cat with golden amber eyes.

prologue

Winter was a time of affliction, an endeavor which didn't seem to spare any solace. The threats of starvation or the numbness of paws, it was a time feared by all the clans, even the one named after the loathsome season itself.

Though through all the agony, an almost tranquility followed. The gales which roamed through the bare trees was an almost comforting sting, or the warmth from loved ones which lingered as they curled up tightly to remain warm, a type of sentiment which seemed to only ever occur during the coldest season.

Zinniapool was tucked deep within the medicine cat den, the walls of the engraved cavern blocking out the relentless zephyrs. The only noise that could be heard was the distant whistling of wind and the gentlest of snores from her former mentor who lay in the nest beside her. Eventually, her thoughts were paused and she was lost to the night in a deep slumber.

However her mind was not paused for long. Instead, it was an almost transcendence to a realm of something preternatural. Zinniapool was soon on her paws, though she was not afraid. Her ancestors and their home held a distinct smell, one which drew comfort out of her, though the medicine cat was more than confused when she was greeted by no one but herself.

Before her very own nose stood herself, though within her own copper eyes was a look of complete horror. Zinniapool was completely still, analyzing the mirror image version of herself before she began circling it, trying to understand what she was seeing, or trying to understand the message she was being told.

She was afraid now.

Suddenly inaudible whispers began to hum within her ear, words she strained so desperately to hear.

Corruption.

Over and over, the singular word was beginning to grow louder and much angrier. Zinniapool could feel herself growing fragile as she slouched down to the ground, shutting her eyes as tightly as she could as she tucked her head within her paws, praying over and over for the screaming to end, until the only one left screaming was herself.

"Zinniapool!"

Cold.

She was cold again.

Zinniapool snapped open her eyes to frantically meet a concerned green stare, that of her previous mentor Eveningleaf. The two held each other in a silent stare, eyes completely locked in a frenzy of fear and confusion.

"Bad dream?" Eveningleaf finally spoke, the concern in her eyes bleeding into something much softer. Zinniapool shook her head, trying to form the thoughts stuck in her head into verbal words.

"I think I am," she paused quickly, "I think something really bad is going to happen to me, Eve." As she spoke, her words grew raspy and quiet as she looked at her shaking paws.

"Why do you say that?" Eveningleaf responded, her words much more calm than her quivering counterpart.

"I was in StarClan, and no one was there, just me, but there was another one..."

"Another what?"

"Me!" She bursted, widened copper eyes flashing back up to meet the other medicine cat's stare. "I looked so scared, so empty, and this voice kept *screaming* at me, I could feel the words, Eve, I could feel them throughout my *entire* body."

Eveningleaf was quiet, though her silence was louder than words.

Was she mad? Was she scared of me? Did she think I was corrupted? The thoughts haunted Zinniapool's merciless mind, and she silently begged for the cat who had taught her all she knew to speak. *Say something. Anything.*

"Do you know why I chose you to be my apprentice?"

The question seemed to dim the relentless voices in Zinniapool's head as confusion set in.

"Because my mom is your sister?" She whispered feebly, and though she never intended the phrase to be funny in the slightest, Eveningleaf couldn't help but chuckle.

"StarClan no, I would do anything to spite your mother." She countered before she allowed her laurel stare to soften once more.

"When you were just a kitten, you came screaming to me. I remember being terrified, thinking you had hurt yourself or one of your siblings had been hurt, but neither of those were the case. You came to me with the smallest mouse, freezing and barely breathing, *begging* me to save it's life."

As Eveningleaf spoke, instant memories came rushing back to when Zinniapool had found the mouse. She remembered being brought to instant tears at the thought of the little thing being cold and alone.

"I would've never typically waste herbs on an animal we use to feed us, especially one that I was sure would never even survive, but I just couldn't say no when you were so distraught over it. So I tried to save him, and you didn't leave my side once."

"Good thing you did." Zinniapool murmured.

"I know, by some miracle he survived and you were so happy. You grabbed some red berries all on your own, dyed a small piece of his fur, and we both called a clan meeting and informed the clan that they were not allowed to hunt the mouse with red fur."

"I remember." She grinned, reminiscing over the memory. "We went to the field and released him, and he even seemed hesitant to leave us at first."

"Yeah, it look a bit of time, but the little guy finally scurried off into the tall grass. I remember watching you help me throughout the entire process, and I instantly knew that you would make an incredible medicine cat one day, and you proved me right."

"Thank you, this really helped." Zinniapool murmured, offering the other she-cat a faint smile in which was returned to her.

They two spent a bit of time talking until Eveningleaf had eventually fallen back into sleep, however Zinniapool was still wide awake. The medicine cat gave her former mentor one last look before she exited the den, being met by an instant cold which engulfed her entirely. Moonlight trickled from the night sky, sending the settled snow into a brilliant gleam. Zinniapool welcomed the freezing touch to her paws as she made her way out of camp, enjoying the company of herself.

Zinniapool wasn't necessarily a loner, she was far from it. She loved her clanmates and she loved being with them, hearing the elder's stories from the days of their youth, watching the kits play with the same tattered mossball from her own childhood, picking flowers with her sister that they would bring to their brother and place in his fur despite his obvious annoyance, running through the mountain with her two best friends and learning the art of healing from not only her mentor, but a cat she had grown to treasure so much. There was no better way she'd want to live life.

Though she still enjoyed the peace accompanied by being within her own presence and the creative thoughts which laced her mind.

Despite it all, she knew something separated her from her clan. Eveningleaf just called it intuition, but Zinniapool knew there was something she couldn't explain which allowed her to have deep insight on certain situations. Half the time she didn't even understand how to even put it into words, and she wasn't sure she ever would.

She figured that's why her nightmare had frightened her so much. Her life force was strong, and she didn't hide that. She embraced it, so anything she felt might damage that force sent her into a sense of paranoia. Though Eveningleaf had dulled her fear, and she was

grateful for that.

However a feeling of apprehension began to form a pit deep within her stomach as she continued walking, and suddenly she was following a trail of black feathers, though her curiosity far outweighed her fear.

She felt as though the world was pulling her in, the forest whispering little prompts into her ear as she continued to follow the trail until she was met with something she instantly knew to be something deeper than a coincidence.

Before her was a group of dead crows, laid out in a perfect circle, though not a single drop of blood covered the ground. However the feeling of immediate horror didn't settle until Zinniapool noticed what was in the dead center of the circle.

The little mouse she had saved from her childhood was sprawled out, and if she didn't know any better she'd guess he was sleeping by how peacefully he was laying, though the way his chest failed to rise and fall was indication enough to know he was dead.

It was a multitude of emotions which completely devoured her, she felt as though she was going to faint from the intensity of it all. Her heart was beating rapidly now, her thoughts overwhelming her mind. She backed up in a dazed terror, copper eyes shining madly in the brilliant moonlight which also seemed to shed the perfect amount of light to showcase the disturbing scene before her.

Any consolation she had been granted was gone now, all in a single moment.

Something was so incredibly wrong, an evil the clans have never witnessed, and an evil which she feared stemmed from herself.

chapter 1

"So he's a *little* shy, he still shows so much potential regardless. You know they always say hard work beats talent, and he has the work ethic that Copperpaw just doesn't have. Otterfur can go ahead and wipe that smug look off her face if she thinks her apprentice is so much better than mine, hiding behind her forced humbleness. What-ev-er, I can see right though her."

It a was typical occurrence from Sparrowpurr, to rant and whine about every little inconvenience. The russet molly was truly convinced the world was out to get her, but Zinniapool had a feeling it stemmed from voices of insecurity. Her best friend could hide behind her own feigned confidence all she liked, but in reality — or as Sparrowpurr liked to say— Zinniapool could *actually* see right through her.

"You know, maybe your obsession with being right all the time will rub off on Creekpaw. They do say personality can be adapted, and wouldn't we love to have another know-it-all sauntering through camp." Lilacpetal spoke, however his voice held a type of lightheartedness that stemmed from his gentle humor, however Sparrowpurr didn't seem too amused.

"Oh shut it, you're only jealous that I got an apprentice within my first moon of being a warrior and you didn't."

"Maybe because Lightstar didn't wanna deal with your complaints because StarClan forbid anyone is more qualified than you." Zinniapool chimed in, eyes shining feverishly in the midday sunlight.

It was an interesting dynamic, the trio between them. If Zinniapool believed in past lives, she'd assume Lilacpetal was probably some ruler that lived to be as old as dirt and had ridiculous amounts of wisdom that still shine through into his present life. Sparrowpurr on the other paw was probably a finch, because those birds truly have nothing but the audacity. They were all born around the same time

and grew up in the nursery together, getting into all kinds of trouble- well, more like Sparrowpurr getting into trouble and Lilacpetal and Zinniapool having to get her out of it.

But aside from the banter and arguments that usually lack any substantiality, the three were extremely close and maybe borderline codependent.

"I mean, be honest with me, and really honest. Who has better technique? Creekpaw does, no questions asked! Copperpaw does this weird thing with his tail that would alert a mole of his presence. A mole! He's a mouse-brain."

"You do realize they are my little brothers, right? And you do realize you just called my brother a mouse-brain, right?" Lilacpetal deadpanned, and the momentary horror which flickered over the russet she-cat's face would've almost been funny until her regret quickly faded with contempt.

"Have you even said more than three words to them? The brotherly love is strong, *Petal*." Sparrowpurr grinned, playfully cuffing her paw over his ears in which he annoyingly batted away with a muffled shut up.

However before Lilacpetal could send another fiery retort in counter, an immediate alarm was sent off within the trio as they paused, all three consuming the new and foreign scents which danced at their noses.

"That's new." Zinniapool mewed, eyes flickering nervously towards Sparrowpurr, almost instinctively. Despite her russet friend's many flaws, the medicine cat always felt a sense of protection around her, like she was safe whenever she was with her.

"SummerClan?" Lilacpetal queried, however Zinniapool naturally shook her head in response.

"You've never even been to the border, how would you know it's not SummerClan?" Sparrowpurr retorted, however Zinniapool just looked at her, and for a moment she was offended but she soon realized that it was true, she had no idea what SummerClan's scent

was. All she knew was that this wasn't it.

"Hush." Lilacpetal scolded before a look of concern crossed his face, the intruding smell growing immensely in just a few fleeting moments. Zinniapool could feel her heart drumming against her chest, trying to remmeber the few battle moves Eveningleaf had taught her as a standard precaution in case she was ever in a situation like this, however she seemed to be completely at a loss. *Should've probably paid attention during those lessons,* she silently scolded herself.

"There." Sparrowpurr whispered urgently, instantly dropping to the ground as the russet molly crawled through the undergrowth, Lilacpetal following her motions, leaving the two perfectly in sync. Zinniapool tried to mimic their motions as best she could, however before she had time to master the art of crouching, Sparrowpurr was screeching and soon she could hear a mixture of different yowls. Zinniapool poked her head through the undergrowth, watching as Lilacpetal was circling a small sable tomcat who seemed to move as if he was made of silk, his movements so alluringly graceful. The way the dainty tomcat moved was almost deceiving, she instantly noticed the way Lilacpetal was growing dizzy by his movements, and the daunting glint which pooled within his sable opponent's mischievous stare. *It was as if this was a game to him.*

She then glanced towards Sparrowpurr, her russet friend in a hissing match with yet another dainty feline, a calico this time. Eventually, Sparrowpurr sprung forward, her teeth aiming for the calico's neck, however Zinniapool didn't get a chance to see the endgame as she was knocked to the ground, her body instantly heaving as she got the breath knocked out of her. She glanced up, her copper eyes meeting another pair of blazing copper, and she was almost taken back. The cat who had her pinned had to be only mid-apprentice age, and his eyes definitely gleamed with the excitement of one. She wasn't a fighter by any means, but she felt a surge of confidence as she seemed to have an age and size advantage against her opponent.

Zinniapool was able to free a paw, and immediately send her claws towards his chest and face, whatever she could reach, however her

opponent seemed to dodge each blow carefully, and instead was able to hold her free paw under his weight, leaving her completely paralyzed beneath him. This began to send immediate panic throughout her because of her limited movement, and she was left in a trance as the tomcat who had her pinned raised his claw. The medicine cat instinctively closed her eyes, embracing for his claws to meet her skin, but they never did.

"Revel, have you completely lost your manners? Leave her alone before I declaw you myself."

A foreign voice traveled into her ears, and Zinniapool felt a weight leave her body as her opponent hopped off of her, his fluffy tail fluttering as he approached the voice which had just scolded him.

"Sorry Genesis." Her younger opponent spoke, however his voice didn't seem genuine. "Even though they attacked us fir-"

"That's enough, Revel. They were only defending their home, you know that kind of loyalty more than anyone." The foreign voice spoke again; Genesis, she assumed.

"You put up a good fight, my friend." Another voice spoke up, one coming from the dainty sable tomcat who had been fighting Lilacpetal. "My name is Salem."

"Nice to meet you," Lilacpetal paused hesitantly, "I think?"

"Likewise." Salem nearly sung, however his bright greenish-yellow eyes were distracted by Sparrowpurr and the calico, a hostility still hovering over them despite the resolved situation. Zinniapool didn't fail to notice the way the calico's eyes burned with something nearly hysterical, she almost felt as if the tension could shake the ground.

"*Eden,"* Genesis prompted softly, his tail resting gently on the calico's shoulder, "remember what we went over." Zinniapool felt her confusion sink in as she watched the other she-cat's eyes close, the two whispering a nearly inaudible saying to each other before she opened her eyes, seemingly much more calm now. Sparrowpurr just looked at her as if she was a freak, and Zinniapool didn't blame

her.

"My name is Genesis, as I'm sure you already gathered." The oldest tomcat began once more from where he stood beside Eden, his eyes softening. "I should've taught them to know better when on another's territory, and they are *terribly sorry."* He spoke, however it was obvious that last sentence was meant for the youngest of the group as Genesis glared at an unfazed Revel.

"What do you want from us?" Sparrowpurr spit, her tail lashing feverishly, her claws flexing on the soil beneath her as Lilacpetal nudged her in an attempt to calm her down.

"A home, only temporarily." Genesis spoke, not faltering his words once as his eyes narrowed with Sparrowpurr, who almost choked on her laugh as if she was in disbelief he would ever ask that.

"Have you lost your mind? Or is it the old age finally catching up to you? *Not happening."* Sparrowpurr snarled as she stood to her paws, her teeth bared in a silent warning.

Genesis didn't seem phased by her answer, instead he redirected his gaze to settle with Zinniapool, which resulted in a confused stare from her two friends, though she was just as confused as them.

"Zinniapool, we can learn from one another. You need me, *more than you know."* Genesis explained.

"He's messing with you Zin, let's just chase them off. I don't have time for this." Sparrowpurr hissed, however the medicine cat only silenced her with a small flick of her tail. Instead, she just allowed herself to examine the four intruders before her, and a new feeling seemed to settle deep within her.

A feeling of comfort.

"Let's take them home."

"Did the little brat hit you hard enough that you've officially *lost it?"* Sparrowpurr protested immediately, stepping in front of her friend to block her view of the newcomers.

"Excuse you." Revel retorted.

"I can't explain it Sparrowpurr, and I'm not asking you to trust them, but please, *trust me."* Zinniapool's voice grew momentarily frail as her copper eyes pleaded with that of her headstrong friend, a silence clouding over them.

"I trust you." Lilacpetal spoke up in her place, and that was enough to keep Sparrowpurr from speaking up in protest, even though the look of distaste on her face was still painfully clear.

"Lead the way." Salem purred as he leapt forward, brushing past Sparrowpurr who only swatted him away, however he only chuckled in response.

"Right, this way." Zinniapool murmured as she began following the leafy path back home, the assembled cats following behind her, all excelt Revel who ran up towards her, a cheeky grin on his face.

"Your technique could use some work." The brown tabby stated, resulting in an embarrassed glance from the medicine cat who just looked at her paws as Lilacpetal took the lead back home and she started faltering to the back of the group where she was met by Genesis.

"Revel is young, don't mind him. Besides, you're not a fighter. You're a healer." The oldest of the group reassured, however she didn't feel comforted. Not at all.

"How?" She queried, leaving the question to have many answers. Genesis chuckled, however she didn't miss the knowing look which laced his expression, even if he didn't answer her question, but she supposed she didn't know what to ask although the question still haunted her mind.

"I never told you my name. You knew it anyways."

"Sure you didn't mention it somewhere?" Genesis responded a little too innocently, and the look on his face only confused her more.

She didn't get to question him further as the two were interrupted by an energetic Revel.

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"So let me get this straight. They attacked us. Then they asked to live in our home. Am I hearing this correctly?" Lightstar queried, however his tone didn't necessarily sound too exasperated.

"Okay when you put it that way, it does sound a little naive." Lilacpetal murmured as he redirected his gaze to Zinniapool.

"*A little?"* Dimglow grumbled from where he stood beside his leader, yellow gaze narrowed on the four newcomers.

"To be fair, we attacked them first." Zinniapool defended. "Just let them speak their peace, Lightstar, please."

"You're lucky I respect you." Lightstar muttered before he quietly sighed and let his gaze settle with Genesis. "Explain yourself."

Genesis nodded as he settled down, seemingly already making himself at home as he began to groom his already groomed tabby pelt. "My name is Genesis, and these three are Salem, Revel and Eden. We are travelers."

"Very descriptive." Sparrowpurr hissed, however she was silenced by Lightstar who only gave her a warning glare.

"We mean no harm, all we offer is to teach and all we ask in return is to learn." Genesis explained as he sat back up, the smug look which had been lacing his face the moment she meant him now completely vanished, replaced with a look of authenticity.

"What could you possibly teach us that we don't already know?" Dimglow queried far too accusingly as he stepped forward, his face now directly aligned with Genesis.

"Maybe how to remove your tail from your-"

"*Revel*." Genesis scolded, giving the younger tabby a momentary glance before he backed away from the FallClan deputy and stepped back with his own group. "I promise you, we do not wish to stay long, and we will become one of your own in the time we do. We will follow your lead, hunt alongside you and coexist in a way I
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think you will grow to appreciate. All we ask is for a chance, I think you will like what we have to offer."

Lightstar was quiet, a look of uncertainty evident on his face, though it was clear of the divide which cut a clear line through the cats of FallClan.

Sootflower stepped up to the centre of the assembled cats where she took place beside Lightstar, her tail resting comfortingly on his shoulder. "I think this could be a great opportunity for FallClan."

"I'm all for it." Eveningleaf added in as she joined the group and took place beside Zinniapool, offering her former apprentice a small smile before looking at the foreign cats. "And if they try to kill us, maybe this can be a learning experience anyways. Win-win situation." She shrugged.

"Very comforting." Dimglow muttered, however Eveningleaf seemed quite amused with herself.

"So they can stay?"

Lightstar sighed, his cerulean stare settling with Genesis once more as if he was hoping he'd find some sign to give him guidance in this situation, but that wasn't going to happen.

"For now, I suppose."

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First chapter is out! Not going to lie, I have been so incredibly busy these last two months and I got a little lazy with the writing towards the end, but I'm excited for this story nonetheless. c:

chapter 2

Zinniapool asked questions. Many questions, ever since she could process her own cognitive thoughts. It was natural, but her curiosity outreached any of the other apprentices. Some of the questions couldn't be answered. Some things were just far too complex to be comprehended by a simple mind, as Eveningleaf would say.

She didn't believe anything about the mind was simple. She believed there was an answer to all questions, and she believed that she was capable of holding all that knowledge. She wanted it. Craved it.

Her whole life she felt isolated. Not in the sense of being alone, not at all. She was far from that. She had amazing friends and an amazing family. She felt isolated in a more sense of self, or identity. Something separated her from her clan, she just wasn't sure what.

Since the arrival of Genesis and his band of travelers, Zinniapool was nothing less than intrigued, yet she kept a cautionary distance. The clan seemed to divide between the four, some eager to learn more about their newfound allies while others remained weary and hostile. The medicine cat wasn't sure where she stood, but something about them offered her a sense of security and almost drowned out that feeling of isolation that had haunted her since she could first remember.

So days would pass. The apprentices would gather around Genesis every day, listening to the endless chain of stories the older tomcat had to tell, stories that he experienced. Things Zinniapool could only dream of. Eventually warriors began to join in and soon enough, even Lightstar was sitting there, his eyes bright with curiosity like a little kit.

It was beautiful, and although Zinniapool still hadn't grown the confidence to involve herself yet, she loved watching it all unfold.

Days continued to pass, and that morning Zinniapool could almost

feel a pull in her stomach, as if some incorporeal being was pushing her. She stepped outside, a chilling zephyr pressing against her nose as the multitude of golden, red and brown leaves fluttered from the baring trees to cover the ground in a blanket of fall's welcoming.

Her copper eyes flickered to every barrier of her clan's camp, briefly studying everyone before her eyes settled on one particular feline; Eden. The calico was definitely the most unusual out of the four travelers, mainly secluding herself to empty parts of camp and steering clear of everyone else. Zinniapool found that she was observing her the most, almost becoming uncannily familiar with the mottled she-cat's mannerisms. It was strange, sure, but Zinniapool felt this need to know her or at least understand her.

The lilac tabby held her ground for a few fleeting moments, an unsure expression glazing her face as her eyes bore into the calico, however a feeling of pure panic struck her as Eden's amber eyes made direct contact with her own. The medicine cat felt her entire body heat up immediately out of embarrassment, subconsciously thankful for the relentless gales which began to pick up and cool her down. Another strain of leaves fell from the trees as the winds continued to grow in intensity, however the two she-cats never let their eyes wander off one another. It was a strange interaction, but Zinniapool finally just swallowed her fear and embarrassment. Eden already caught her staring, it's a little too late to back out now, so the medicine cat just feigned confidence and made her way over.

As she took her first step, Eden immediately broke her gaze away, amber eyes locking with her dainty paws. As the medicine cat approached her, she felt herself instantly flooded with foreign emotions, feelings which seemed to delve into the deepest parts of her, and nothing about them were minuscule.

She was confused, that was the best and most simplest way she could put it.

"Hey," the tabby started nervously, "I'm Zinniapool, we met when you first got here, attacking each other and all; what a warm welcome." She spoke awkwardly, immediately regretting that final sentence and silently scolding herself. She was sure it would've caused some form of hostility from the petite molly before her.

If it had, Eden surely didn't show it. Instead she just kept quiet, amber eyes unwavering as she continued to stay locked on her eerily still paws. *Okay, strange.* Zinniapool thought quickly, feeling her words get stuck in her throat as feelings of regret began to flood over her. *I should've never done this,* she thought bitterly.

"You're Eden, right? That's a beautiful name." After a dreadfully and awkwardly long silence, Zinniapool decided to ask a question she already knew the answer to in hope to garner any reaction out of the calico. The compliment wasn't a lie, either. The medicine cat wasn't unfamiliar with standard names, in fact, she was aware that the names clan cats received were far more uncommon. Eden was a beautiful name, but her name wasn't the only thing alluring about her. Everything about her was truthfully enchanting, or perhaps Zinniapool had just created some hyperreal fantasy about the calico in her head. She tend to do that a lot and it was a nasty habit she wanted to break, because no one was ever as perfect in reality as they were to the version she created of them in her head.

Eden seemed to perfectly depict this as the calico completely ignored the question. In fact, she seemed to completely ignore Zinniapool's existence as a whole when only moments prior they seemed to be having the greatest staring contest of all time.

Who taught you manners? Zinniapool queried in her head before she flicked her tail to announce she was leaving— as if Eden would even notice or care— before she awkwardly dismissed herself.

"Don't take it personally."

"*Ah*!" Zinniapool chirped, jumping off all four paws as the fur along her neck rose involuntarily. Once her paws met the ground once more, her eyes frantically looked down to gaze into yet another set of amber eyes.

Revel.

"You scared me to death." She muttered breathlessly as she began to lap down her unkempt fur, finally getting over her fit of embarrassment earlier just to be engulfed with another wave of humiliation. However her interest was sparked as she registered

what he said before her sudden jump scare and she settled her eyes on him, annoyance being replaced with curiosity.

"What are you talking about?" She queried.

"Don't take it personally." Revel repeated nonchalantly, shrugging as he did so before plopping down on his side, a single claw drawing in the dirt carelessly. Once he realized the medicine cat was still confused, he sighed and rolled his eyes before sitting up. "I'm talking about Eden."

"What about her?" Zinniapool pressed, feeling her yearn for answers increase. "Don't take what personally?"

"She doesn't talk— well, she does— but only to Genesis, me and Salem, and even for us it's *super* rare. She's a little creepy," Revel paused quickly, "don't tell Genesis I said that."

The tabby was quiet for a moment, her ecru stare settling momentarily with the calico before quickly redirecting them back to the younger tomcat before her. If anything, she only had more questions, and the chances of her ever getting answers seemed to be slim to nothing, so she assumed she should probably just drop it.

"You know, it was you who ultimately convinced your leader to let us stay with your clan, and now you're the only who has made no effort to talk to us." Revel mewed, almost faintly, which struck the medicine cat out of her thoughts. "Why is that?"

At his query, Zinniapool went quiet once more. She didn't know if he'd understand her reason, StarClan she wasn't even sure she understood it herself. Maybe it was intuition or some kind of innate voice subconsciously speaking to her, but that sounded crazy. Weirdly enough, the feelings of comfort around them coincidentally terrified her and it all stemmed from the fact that she wasn't sure why she felt the way she did, because it was way too strong to be something not to dwell over. Luckily for her, she was able to avoid the question as commotion began to start and the two of them turned their heads to see Dimglow approaching Salem, who was surrounded by Creekpaw and Copperpaw.

"This can't be good." Zinniapool mumbled, eliciting a quick glance from Revel before the both of them set their eyes on the confrontation that was bound to go down.

"What is StarClan's name is that?" The deputy spat, his dim yellow eyes narrowing accusingly on the lithe black tomcat before him. Salem straightened himself out as he remained quiet and instead of verbally responding to Dimglow, he just began nudging an unfamiliar set of herbs in front of the deputy.

"Answer me, *outsider*." The deputy insisted, forcing his head alarmingly close to Salem's. Zinniapool felt her heart began to quicken, quickly looking at Revel.

"Should we do something?"

"No." Revel responded hastily, a smug grin forming on his face as his eyes fell into nearly calculating slits. Zinniapool was, once more, covered with a wave of confusion. She was sure Dimglow wouldn't flat out attack a guest, but then again, the deputy was growing increasingly heated with the travelers since the first day they arrived.

"They're herbs, but instead of helping with physical pain, they cure mental pain. Isn't that right Salem?" Copperpaw mewed, his eyes shining excitedly. Salem's brightly-lit yellow stare flickered proudly to the younger tomcat.

"Very good, my friend." He praised and the medicine cat didn't fail to notice the way the sable feline's expression changed into something more challenging as he began to circle the deputy, often changing the way he stepped. She could see his muscles rippling beneath silky black fur and she could feel a migraine coming up from the disconcerting movements. She had seen him do it before, back when they first met. He had been able to grab an entire upper paw on Lilacpetal from it.

"How does he do that?" Zinniapool muttered breathlessly, shaking her head briefly to clear the confusion before her eyes settled on Dimglow, who seemed to be just as baffled to Salem's bemusing movements.

"He's incredible, that's how." Revel purred, which garnered a quick glance from Zinniapool before she glanced back to the scene before them. She didn't want that answer, she wanted a logical one, she wanted something that would explain the science and logistics behind it. That's how her brain was wired.

Dimglow finally looked away, his ears instantly pinning as his claws dug into the ground, a clear act of anger and aggression. "You think the clan can't see past your acts of manipulation, but they will soon. Stop brainwashing our apprentices with your nonsense."

"Dimglow, he's not." Creekpaw murmured. "He's just teaching us, and it's really interesting. Just hear him out, I think you'd understand if you just listened."

This seemed to have the opposite effect, instead Dimglow was growing more vexed and if it wasn't obvious from his flexing claws, it was in the way his brown tabby fur was slowly rising.

"Enough with the clever-witted words and deceiving little movements, state your true motives. How can we trust these *herbs* aren't just poison? How can we trust you aren't here to indoctrinate our entire clan? Because your actions speak much louder than you words, *witch."*

"What in StarClan's name is he talking about?" Zinniapool muttered, looking to Revel once more but he seemed too heavily ingrained on the argument taking place in front of them to notice her staring.

The rest of the clan started to notice it, some trying to hide their eavesdropping while others just didn't care and made their staring obvious. Zinniapool could feel herself starting to worry this was going to get physical, however she felt herself calm down as Lightstar, Sootflower and Eveningleaf approached the bickering group.

"What's going on?" Lightstar demanded, his hardened crystalline eyes narrowing on Salem and this caused a callous grin to cross Dimglow's face, which Zinniapool found nothing but odd.

"Salem is just showing us some herbs, nothing different than what

Eveningleaf does. Dimglow just has a stick up his rump, that's all." Copperpaw explained and the look of disgust which replaced Dimglow's originally smug face was nothing short from amusing.

"Copperpaw, manners." Sootflower scolded, however Zinniapool was convinced she could see the sable she-cat holding back a laugh of her own.

"Dimglow, your loyalty to FallClan is inspiring and your worry for your clanmates is appreciated, but the travelers— including Salem — have given us no reason not trust them. In fact, they've been a great asset to the clan." Lightstar began cautiously, trying to calm his upset deputy without further provoking him which seemed to be impossible at this point.

"What are you saying?"

"He's saying you need to chill out." Eveningleaf deadpanned, clearly annoyed the most out of the assembled cats. A deafening silence fell upon everyone and Zinniapool just wanted it to be over.

"You'll feel real stupid when you learn I was right all along, but so be it. Maybe you fools will need to learn it the hard way that these cats will be our downfall, and you'll all be equally to blame." He snarled as his face grew uncomfortably close to Eveningleaf's, each word leaving his tongue even more poisonous than the one before it. Zinniapool could feel anger begin to unravel within her, her own claws flexing as he got alarmingly close to her mentor.

Eventually he backed off, spitting in Salem's direction as one final act of defiance before he sauntered past Zinniapool, and the medicine cat was immediately engulfed with inaudible whispers. Her copper gaze began looking around frantically, trying to make sense of the whispers which were gradually getting louder.

"What's wrong with you?" Revel queried, concern lacing his typically valorous expression.

"You don't hear that?" Zinniapool questioned back, her quickening heartbeat still not loud enough to drown out the piercing whispers which seemed to be right beside her, she was even convinced she

could feel the hot breath of another presence whispering them down her back, yet no one was there.

"Hear what?"

At his response, Zinniapool's eyes just widened with horror to find that whatever was happening, it was only happening to her, and that feeling of isolation quickly returned.

Something was wrong with her.

Something was so incredibly wrong with her.

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Nightfall had steadily crept upon the cats of FallClan, bathing them in an illuminative glow. The sky was spotless of clouds so the stars of Silverpelt were brighter than ever. Zinniapool had situated herself at the bank of Fishcape until the whispers subsided, staring at her distorted reflection in the creek's starlit surface.

She felt disturbed, and the worst part about it was that she felt like it was something she had to face alone. She was terrified that if she spoke up, the cats she loved most would think she was crazy or turn their backs on her, and she couldn't think of a fate any worse than that.

The lilac tabby was distracted from her thoughts as the sound of gentle scuffling rumbled softly in her ears, and she looked around to see a tiny little head pop out from the foliage, and a feeling of warmth embraced her as the little creature came closer and she was able to see a patch of dyed red fur.

"*Squeak."* She purred, watching as the little mouse nibbled on an acorn, however an unsettling truth remained. "But how?" She whispered aloud, her voice incredibly delicate, but she quickly concluded that perhaps the image she had seen of the little mouse, dead, was simply another fragmented image her mind had tricked her into seeing.

That seemed to be a frequent pattern these days, at least.
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"It's late."

Zinniapool felt alarm prickle at her pelt once more, but quickly calmed down when she saw Genesis. She made brief eye contact with him before her gaze redirected to Squeak, but to her dismay, the mouse was gone.

"Do you like it out here?" The old feline questioned as he settled beside her, swaying his paw over the water's surface without touching it, however she was sure she could see movement occur anyways. She decided not to question it, she didn't feel as though she could really trust what she saw anymore.

"Yes, the tranquility helps me focus." She replied, sighing quietly as she once again looked at her distorted reflection. It was almost fitting because she felt like she no longer knew herself, or that her perception of reality was, shockingly enough, distorted.

"You feel lost." Genesis spoke, however it wasn't a question or an assumption. He spoke as if it was factual. To be fair he wasn't wrong, but it was a bold thing to say about someone he didn't really know.

"Something like that."

"I think you need to trust your gut instincts more often, Zinniapool. You aren't crazy, and I can promise you this, intuition for cats like you and me is *never* wrong." Genensis mewed as he met her gaze, and she swore she could see all the wisdom of his previous moons shine so vibrantly within his enduring blue stare, but the question remained; *what in StarClan's name did he mean by that?*

Perhaps she was so weary of the travelers because of their alarmingly on point assumptions about her life that were true, like when Genesis had called her name when she had never once stated it, even though he claims she did by mistake. Even if that was the case, it still didn't explain how he knew she was a medicine cat before she ever mentioned it.

It was all making her head hurt, and she wasn't in the mood to question him, not tonight, so she simply changed the subject.

"Genesis, what's wrong with Eden?" She finally asked, a little scared he might find the question offensive or that the question in itself was insensitive. She didn't want it to be, and she truly had no ill intentions. If anything, she just wanted to understand *something*. Unfortunately for her, Genesis wasn't going to provide that clarity for her and returned back to his vague responses.

"With time, young healer, knowledge will come to you."

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this is the worst piece of writing i've ever done, it's been a minute and this was a painfully boring chapter for me to write. starting a new story is usually harder because it takes a little bit of buildup to get into the interesting parts, and i feel like this story really kicks up at chapter 4.

also, this story is going to be relatively short! i have 12 chapters planed + an epilogue and i'm hoping to have it all done before may, but that may be wishful thinking.

either way i hope you enjoyed this chapter. any and all feedback is greatly appreciated!! <3

chapter 3

"Zinniapool! Get off your lazy rump, the kits are coming and I need help gathering everything."

Zinniapool stirred as the voice of her former mentor yelled in her ears before she started mumbling inaudible words of defiance. *Couldn't the kits wait until morning? Was that too much to ask?*

She heard Eveningleaf go quiet, assuming in her half-asleep mind that maybe she had just imagined her talking, but suddenly she was brought to full consciousness as she felt her body drenched in cold water and up she was, hissing instinctively as her copper eyes glared at her far-too-smug mentor.

"Was that really necessary?" The medicine grumbled, looking at the broad leaf Eveningleaf had used to scoop the water before looking back to the culprit of the cold and calculated attack.

"I think so." Eveningleaf mused, cuffing her former apprentice over the ears which Zinniapool swatted away before she directed her to a stash of herbs and motioned for her to follow along.

The tabby gave her pelt a few vigorous shakes before she sauntered to the stash of herbs, grabbing a few borage leaves just in case along with some poppyseeds. Eveningleaf had soaked some moss in water and grabbed a few sticks and the two were heading for the nursery.

It was late, however the energy within camp was exhilarating. It seemed that everyone was awake in preparation of greeting the kits who would soon be born, and the irritation Zinniapool had felt in her first moments of being awake were fading away as she joined in on her clan's excitement.

As a healer, she was used to typically treating sickness and wounds, being with her clanmates during their most vulnerable and traumatic times, however the birth of new life was something

different, and so much better.

As the tabby squeezed into the nursery, her amber stare instantly landed on a pair of solemn eyes in the background.

Genesis.

The older tomcat was helping in calming down the distressed mother-to-be, whispering words of encouragement and affirmation.

"Dandelionpath, how are you feeling?" Eveningleaf asked, setting down the herbs she gathered as Zinniapool followed suit.

"Never better." The queen winced as she gave them both a forced smile, her claws digging into her nest. The medicine cat nodded before pushing a stick to her, and she didn't even need to say anything as Dandelionpath immediately bared down relentlessly.

"I gave her a few of my own herbs, I hope it isn't a problem. It's helped assist in births I've been apart of in the past." Genesis spoke in which Eveningleaf just nodded in appreciation, murmuring a quiet thank you.

"They've really hel- ouch- helped, even if it doesn't look like it. I guess medicine can't mak- ow- it all go away." Dandelionpath spoke, wincing between words as her claws bared into the nest she was laying in.

"Medicine can only do so much, but once your kits are here, I promise it'll all be worth it." Zinniapool purred.

It was a long night and tiring for all parties involved. Typically, no one was allowed to assist in a kitting unless it was a medicine cat or significant other, but Eveningleaf allowed Genesis to stay and he managed to keep the mother calm, or as calm as she could be that is. Eventually, four healthy kits were born.

Robinkit, Shrewkit, Rosekit and Poppykit.

Sandcurl, the father of the kits, was curled around an exhausted yet content mother and all that could be heard is tiny and fragile mews mixed with purrs from the parents. Zinniapool was about to head

out to give the new family time to themselves until she gazed upon Robinkit, and a montage of images began to flash of her and the little kitten, watching him grow, being taught by her, flashes of optimism and bright eyes, the same type of looks she would give Eveningleaf when she was just an apprentice.

Confusion didn't follow like it normally would when she would experience these flashes, instead she was consumed with a feeling of warmth. She knew that one day, he would be her apprentice, and by some glitch of the universe, she was given the gift to witness it. Zinniapool was about to leave before she made accidental eye contact with Genesis, however she had to do a double take when his eyes shone with a knowing stare, and she knew that whatever she had just experienced, he knew about it.

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The equanimity of sleep was one of life's most exhilarating moments, which was quite ironic if you thought about it. Zinniapool always found herself at most self-comfort when she nestled into the warmth of her nest beside Eveningleaf and let the most complex parts of herself rest in full tranquility. Her mind seemed to be the most troubling part of herself, and yet a part of herself she felt most in tune with. Truth is, she felt as though every version of herself was it's own entity in itself, like many hosts resided within her physical body.

It was almost as if she had a sense of mind over matter, and it was something she never spoke of, because the others wouldn't understand. Sparrowpurr especially. Or maybe it was all in her head and she simply just felt things so intensely that it somehow manifested specific events into reality. The universe worked in such a bizarre way.

Zinniapool tried shutting her mind off, trying to let sleep consume her, finding her body grow tingly as she sighed. *Finally.*

Everything went black, yet she remained in consciousness. Her thoughts were racing, and yet she felt completely glued in place. Suddenly, sight returned to her, yet she wasn't in the medicine cat den. She was somewhere much more desolate, a place that
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appeared to be StarClan yet the energy was strange. Wrong, almost.

Zinniapool pinned her ears in instinct of discomfort, wrapping her tail around her paws nervously as her copper eyes danced around the clearing, darting back and fourth, continuously more frantic than the last until a sable she-cat was before her with eyes as bright as the sun, a deep yellow that seemed to glow urgently in the eerie light.

"Zinniapool." The black feline spoke, a sense of serenity lacing a very distressed tone. It was perplexing, and Zinniapool tried to read the she-cat before her but to no avail, she was composed of so many contrasting emotions and the medicine cat was incapable of piecing them together.

"What's wrong?" She didn't waste time, she wanted to get straight to the point. Cats in StarClan didn't visit to have superficial conversations, and she knew something was wrong. It had to be.

The sable she-cat before her seemed to grow more concerned, a nearly apologetic look lacing her features.

"Is the clan in danger? Please, tell me, what's happening?" The tabby seemed to be pleading now.

"This isn't about the clan, Zinniapool," the feline before her paused cautiously, "this is about you."

"I," Zinniapool breathed out uncertainly, "I don't understand?"

"To be honest with you, neither do I. The others can feel something, an entity, a faded darkness. A darkness which comes from within you, something foreign to StarClan. The others, they're..." The sable molly trailed off, trying to find words to finish the sentence which was making Zinniapool immediately unravel.

The medicine felt her heartbeat quicken, drumming against her chest as her eyes widened in fear, a yearn for understanding shining so vibrantly within her near hysterical gaze. She didn't know what to say or how to get the words out of her throat, so she remained silent, almost by force.

"I don't think you are the issue here, but something about you scares the cats of StarClan. I've fought on your behalf many times, but they are convinced. I'm not even supposed to be here telling you this, but I feel as though something bad may happen to you, Zinniapool. Something really bad."

"What darkness do you speak of?" Zinniapool was falling over her words, her paws even, feeling herself stumble in a wave of fear as she looked around frantically. "Is this a prophecy? Do they see something I cannot? *Who even are you?"*

"This is no prophecy. It's a presence, or really, an *ability* you possess. One they simply do not understand." The sable feline explained, however she continued on before Zinniapool could even process what was being said to her. "My name is Ravenrose, succeeded by Eveningleaf."

"You are a medicine cat." Zinniapool spoke, nearly whispered.

"*Was."* Ravenrose corrected, her eyes blazing like a million suns as she looked away, nearly winced as if she was witnessing some kind of old memory, one full of pain. Had the circumstances been different, Zinniapool would question her, but she was in no state to think of anyone other than herself right now.

"Ravenrose, what do I do?" She asked after a deafening silence, urgency overtaking her once fearful outburst, noy allowing herself a single blink or a single breath during the entirety of it all.

"You will do your job, you will heal, and every time you feel this ability, you will ignore it. You will push it away, and you will move on. I will try to fix this on my end, but I need you to promise me you will not allow this ability to dictate your future decisions and you cannot let it take over your mind. Promise me, Zinniapool."

"I don't understand! *What ability?"* Zinniapool instantly retorted, not allowing herself to leave the other feline's lively gaze.

"Think about it. You know what I'm talking about, you've felt it before, but to you it's simply normal. Something that's always been apart of you, and something you *must* conceal. You shouldn't have

to, but right now, it's for your own good."

Zinniapool went quiet, her mind in chaos, trying to desperately piece it all together. She was straining so hard, until suddenly, everything went black and the air went cold.

She was back in the medicine cat den.

She instantly looked at Eveningleaf, watching her mentor's chest rise and fall so delicately. She wanted to find comfort within the other feline's presence *so bad*, to find reassurance within her words of affirmation, but she didn't know how to even tell her what had just been disclosed to her. Was she even allowed to talk about it?

Zinniapool wallowed in silence and dark thoughts, her heart pounding so hard she thought it would explode from her chest, however her attention was brought to eyes glowing at her in the darkness.

Genesis.

Zinniapool was instantly on her paws, a feeling of instant relief washing over her. Maybe she couldn't tell Eveningleaf, but the travelers had no involvement in the clan or whatever the politics surrounding it were.

"Can we talk?" She murmured, her voice nearly kit-like. Genesis just nodded and turned tail, motioning for her to follow with a small flick of his ear. She didn't waste a single second as she dashed out of the den and was met by the pale moonlight spreading it's dim illumination over her home. She wasn't sure where they were going, but she didn't care, she just followed him and allowed herself to finally breathe.

Zinniapool was so lost in her thoughts that she hadn't noticed Genesis had stopped, but she was quickly brought back to reality when she ran straight into him, a rush of embarrassment taking over her as she muttered a quiet sorry. He just smiled to reassure her it was fine before looking back ahead, his eyes settling on two other cats ahead of them.

Salem and Revel.

"What is she doing here?" Revel hissed, however he was quickly warned as Salem slapped the younger tom's shoulder with his tail.

"Hey! What was that for?" The youthful tabby spat, annoyance evident on his face but Salem just ignored him.

"Revel, she's one of us." Genesis explained simply, not showcasing any signs of annoyance towards the younger feline's arrogance before he redirected his gaze towards the medicine cat, allowing her to talk.

"One of you? I don't understand?" That seemed to be the phrase of the night; *I don't understand.* It was annoying and she had never felt so small before. Or clueless.

"The first day we met, you kept asking me how I knew your name when you never said it. Remember?" Genesis began, striking up a conversation Zinniapool had been yearning for.

"I do." She responded simply, giving him the edge to continue speaking.

"Our minds are quite powerful, more than we give them credit for. That's why some individuals are able to use it in ways that others are not. It's something many do not understand as it is quite complex, but I find that's what makes it all the more beautiful." Genesis spoke, however she was still lost. She needed to know more. She needed a definite explanation, not the pretty words on the wonder of life and it's secrets. It was getting old, and she was desperate.

Genesis was about to continue as she remained silent, however the youngest of the group took the lingering silence as his cue to speak, and the shock that followed had completely drowned out her doubt, or really, any logical reasoning that remained in the back of her head.

"He can like, read minds. It's super cool." Revel chimed in so nonchalantly, as if the words leaving his mouth were typical day-to-

day known facts, like there was nothing unusual to what she was hearing. Zinniapool was instantly mesmerized, though a little weary. She wasn't sure she believed it, but she was curious nonetheless.

"*Really*?" She all she said, the curiosity edging her voice not completely washing out her uncertainty. She was open-minded, sure, but she wasn't naïve.

"It's a lot more complicated than that. I cannot read minds in a way that's hinted at in stories told to the youth." Genesis spoke, and she felt as though she was once more in a wake of confusion.

"It's like a look into certain cats, and it varies from each individual who garners the ability. Genesis can gain insight on the minds of others and sometimes access memories, but for him, he can not do so by choice. It's natural, nearly like he's drawn to certain minds. It's called perceptive telepathy." Salem explained.

"Can you read my mind right now?" Zinniapool queried, and though her question was genuine, the other three felines laughed in sync.

"No, but by the look on your face, you're still quite puzzled, correct?" Genesis mused, however the medicine cat was growing a little irked by how smug he was being.

"Correct. Care to go into, *I don't know*, a little more detail on how this relates to me?" She asked, the edge on her voice something she typically never resorted to. Zinniapool was normally very civil, but the night's array of events were bringing out parts of herself that didn't usually come out.

"Temper!" Revel beamed, nearly jumping from his spot as he approached her energetically. "You surprise me every day, you know that?" Revel questioned.

"I'm so thrilled."

"Think back to last night. You shouldn't have to think hard. You saw something. I saw it too. A glimpse into the future." Genesis continued to explain. He was right, she didn't have to think about

it, it had been at the back of her mind ever since it occurred. She supposed she had just been too startled by her visit with Ravenrose to further allow herself to dwell on it.

"Robinkit." She spoke, nearly inaudible.

"Yes! You see, we're not limited to what we can do. It's called precognition, which means in basic words, a phenomenon of seeing events which take place in the future."

"But how?"

"Quite honestly, it's something our minds are too simple to comprehend. There are different facets on how we perceive reality. A parallel universe. An alternate universe. Call it whatever you like. I'm not sure how much you clan cats know, but we live on Earth. Up in the sky, you see stars, correct?" Salem took over now, and although Zinniapool wasn't sure where this was heading, she just nodded.

"You clan cats are funny. You call them Silverpelt, right? Supposedly every new death, another star is added. Cute idea, but it isn't true. Stars are suns— well, suns are stars— that are extremely far away, and I mean light years away." The small black feline continued, and the medicine felt as though she was having to use every ounce of brain power to understand.

"Light years?"

"The amount of light which travels in twelve moons. Don't think about it too hard, it'll probably make your head hurt." Revel added in.

"Anyways, just like there are other planets in our universe, their are other universes in something we like to call a multiverse. These multiverses include everything, and I mean *everything*. Space, time, matter, energy. All of it." Salem explained as he looked towards the oldest of the group to continue because the puzzled look on Zinniapool's face was enough to show that they weren't making any sense to her.

"Here's a way I can maybe explain in a way you may understand; StarClan is an afterlife, and one of the universes in the multiverse. Each one holds different abilities, and your ancestors are granted some of these abilities which help them predict specific outcomes that have yet to happen, hence telling the future in a way. Correct? You should know this most of all, since you are a medicine cat, and by my understanding, because of your rank you're allowed more access to them as opposed to your clanmates who are warriors." Genesis spoke, using her life to better represent what he was trying to explain to her.

"I suppose I never really thought of it that way. Whenever we receive omens, I don't ever wonder how they know. I guess I just figured it was some kind of enlightenment that came with death. But what I don't understand is how? Why me?"

"I can't answer you that, some are born with a natural sixth sense. This all falls into a word called parapsychology, relating to the unexplainable mental abilities one may possess. Psychic abilities. Abilities that you too, Zinniapool, have been gifted with. This is why I was drawn to your clan. You need a mentor, someone to help you navigate them, because I have a feeling you pocess something that not even I do." The older feline spoke.

"What? Is it bad?" The medicine cat muttered, recalling the words Ravenrose had told her about an ability she held that apparently had StarClan worried, something that not even they possess.

"No, not at all. I know someone else with these same abilities, and they are truly fascinating. A gift so few have. Don't fear it; embrace it. You will learn soon enough."

chapter 4

A sense of comfort followed with knowledge, and now that Zinniapool knew more about herself, more about the differences which set her apart form the mundane, she felt that that she could finally be at ease. For the first time, she wasn't in the dark about who she was, and for the first time, she could almost understand, even if not the full extent. She would get to learn, and she never thought she'd be able to.

The medicine cat was roaming the northern edge of Fishcape, accompanied by her sister Elysianlily as the two picked berries to bring home. It was a pastime she and her sister often would do, bringing the berries home to create a paint-like substance that they would use to color rocks.

"Do you think these red berries look good with the purple? Seems like a strange combination to me, but I was thinking of making some kind of fiery sky-type thing where the world is on fire, or something." Elysianlily murmured, her amber eyes softly grazing over the berries in question as she seemed to go over the question in her own mind.

"Your creativity never fails to impress me. I think the colors will blend well, and you could add these blueberries as the base, maybe? I always thought their colors most accurately represented the sky at the beginning of sundown, if you're going for the world-on-fire idea. The falling sun can add onto the idea, with the fading sun symbolizing the fading world." Zinniapool spoke, rambling absentmindedly as she nudged a few of the cerulean berries in a curved leaf.

"My creativity? You've just put me to shame with your idea!" The medicine cat's sister exclaimed, the two laughing gently.

"Just two great minds putting together the best ideas." Zinniapool chimed in, her tail lightly tapping the brindled she-cat's shoulder. "Maybe we can convince Laurelfrost to join us one day."

"Yeah, over our dead body. He would *never."* Elysianlily retorted, and she wasn't necessarily wrong. Zinniapool's brother was... distant, for lack of better words. He was always timid and shy, struggling to make friends with the other kits in the nursery while she and Ely always had been more extroverted. She always tried to involve him, but he never wanted any part in it. Sometimes, however, the two sisters would be able to get their brother to spend time with them when no one else was present. Although it would never last long as the two she-cats would end up annoying him. To be fair, they were quite annoying, and she would admit that.

"Maybe he's officially over our tendacies of decorating his fur with flowers." Zinniapool spoke, her whiskers twitching slightly as her sister chuckled.

"But he looked so cute!"

"I don't think he agreed with us."

"No one ever does, unfortunately." Elysianlily murmured, gathering all the berries she needed as she started to follow the setting sun back home, motioning for the tabby to follow with her tail.

The two began the journey home in a comfortable silence, their jaws full of berries as they followed the setting sun. Lightstar would let them outline the dens with the colored rocks, adding a sense of their own to the camp and everyone always loved it. With the leftover rocks, Zinniapool would always make little presents for her parents and brother, Lilacpetal and Sparrowpurr as well as Eveningleaf. Acts of service had always been her way of expressing love. Perhaps she'd make one for each of the travelers for helping her?

As they followed the path home, her feeling of comfort was slowly fading away in small flickers of panic, the darkening sky adding to her confusion. She was so content before, why was she suddenly getting alarmed? The medicine began looking around skeptically, watching as her shadow danced on the towering trees, however when she looked behind her, she jumped back, startled as she felt a pit form in her stomach.

Before her, just a whisker-length away, was herself in entirety, however it seemed to be a shell version of herself. Her replica didn't seem to have any type of emotion within cold amber eyes and she stood still, almost as if this mirror version of herself was stuck in time.

Zinniapool just stared blankly, her eyes slowly tracing over every inch of the replicated version of herself, her eyes widening as she noticed the faint x-markings covering her body, as if an invisible claw was slowly engraving them within her mirrored-self's skin.

The medicine cat backed away slowly, looking around in search of her sister who was gone, not even her scent lingering.

Once Zinniapool allowed her eyes to rest on herself once more, she felt dread crawl over every inch of her body, the fur on her back rising swiftly as her jaw dropped.

The deepest crimson blood began to fall from each corner of her mirrored-version's eyes, then her ears and eventually blood began to slowly drip from her jaw which was barely agape. She didn't miss the way her teeth were entirely stained vermillion.

"Zinniapool, snap out of it!"

Zinniapool jumped back, looking around frantically, however her bloodied replica was gone and replaced with a worried Elysianlily, her amber eyes bearing into her own.

"Did you have another episode?"

"Yeah. Just another episode." She murmured, her eyes looking around aimlessly until they landed on her paws, ignoring the concerned looks her sister was giving her until she just pushed past her and headed home. Luckily, the brindled feline didn't question her and allowed them to go in silence, but this time, it was far from comfortable.

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"You said I would be okay! You said it was a gift! If you're so wise, then explain to me why I keep seeing it? Why I can't escape it? Why
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I can feel her— *me*— everywhere!" Zinniapool vented, pacing back and fourth frantically.

"I can't explain anything to you in this state, so if you want my help, you need to *calm down."* Genesis explained, his tone a complete contrast of her own as he remained seated and composed, a quiet Revel sitting beside him as he looked back and fourth between the two.

"Okay. Okay." She whispered, slowing down as she tried to collect herself, however she couldn't get the image out of her head, she couldn't even escape the feeling of it. It was like it lingered, breathing over her shoulder, dancing around her mind tauntingly.

"Breathe, Zinniapool. Count if you need to, take in five different things from your surroundings. Close your eyes and indulge in your senses. Set your focus elsewhere. We are in control of our own minds, you just have to try." The tabby explained, the comforting edge of his voice finally coming through to her as she listened, letting her eyelids flutter shut as she took in the smells of the world around her and let her claws flex in the soft grass beneath her, exhaling as a gentle gale pressed against her fur before she finally opened her amber eyes which were much more collected now.

"Thank you, that... helped."

"It always does, you just have to learn how to take control of your mind, even when it feels impossible. Now, tell me what's going on. What has you so shaken?"

"Everything, Genesis! My own ancestors think I'm going to be the demise of everything by what it seems!" She blurted, her eyes flickering from each of his own, almost as if she was challenging him to understand *that.* He didn't seem phased.

"Why do you think that?"

"That night we talked, I was visited by an old medicine cat, a spirit from StarClan. She wasn't even supposed to be there, but she said she had to warn me. StarClan fears whatever gift I have! She said something bad was going to happen to me. She said I had to

conceal it and no matter how hard she tried to convince them, they still believe this *ability* I possess is something dark. They are scared of it. Of me."

"This was the night you talked to us?" Revel queried, and she just nodded urgently.

"You were fine after we talked. What has you worked up again?" Genesis asked.

"I was with my sister. We were by the creek picking berries to use for paint, and on the way home, I saw something. *Someone.* I saw myself, except it had this presence with it, something that was not me. And all these things started happening to my other body, really *awful* things..."

"What kind of things?" Genesis and Revel both said in sync, Genesis in concern while Revel in curiosity.

"These marks, they was being ingrained into my skin, like someone was clawing them into me, but no one was there. And then the blood, it was falling from my eyes, then my ears and then my mouth was *dripping* with it. I can still smell it, Genesis, it's like it follows me everywhere I go!"

Zinniapool could feel her paws shaking uncomfortably now, fidgeting against the ground beneath her as her eyes frantically danced between the assembled felines before her, however no one was saying anything and the silence continued to build and build. She wanted to disappear, fall away into nonexistence.

"What do I do?" She finally blurted, pleading as she stared them down with crazed eyes.

"Calm down, maybe?" Revel spoke; deadpanned really, however his older counterpart seemed to appear more empathetic.

"I think this ability you possess is foreign to your ancestors, and the fear of the unknown is what makes them wary of you. Just prove that it is not something to be afraid of, and yet something to appreciate instead. You cannot let this fear overcome you, because

it may lead you to the darker aspects of it." Genesis explained, his rounded blue eyes carrying a heavy weight which she hadn't seen in them before.

"Okay." She exhaled, closing her eyes momentarily as she allowed her heartbeat to slow. A breeze found it's way through her fur, sending comforting chills down her spine as she finally opened her eyes, more composed than before despite the lingering dread which remained in the pit of her stomach.

"You know, where I come from, cats like you and me coexisted. We were united, much like you and your clan; a luxurious life. One where we accepted one another, embracing the gifts we were born with." Genesis spoke up once more, moving the conversation elsewhere, somewhere far lighter.

Or so she thought.

"It was called The Unification; a group of highly spiritual cats. I was born there, many moons ago. It's where I stumbled upon Revel, abandoned by his mother at only a few days old." He continued to explain, offering Revel a small smile which was returned before redirecting his gaze to Zinniapool's.

"You," she paused as she briefly looked at Revel, "have these abilities as well?"

"No, I don't. They called me temporal, normal mixed in with a bunch of gifted cats. Was a little jarring, if I'm being honest. But they accepted me regardless, despite my own insecurities in the beginning. I felt boring, I suppose, in comparison." Revel went on to speak now, and for once his comments weren't laced with snark or wit. She could've never expected the younger tomcat to have ever suffered from any kind of insecurity given his external personality.

"Spirituality alone isn't a gift and anyone can seek it out, some just have to look a little deeper for it, but there is beauty to find within everyone's individual journey." Genesis explained, giving Revel a gentle nudge in endearment.

"If this home you speak of is so amazing, why are you here?" The

medicine cat questioned, thinking nothing of the question until both tomcats gave each other a nearly panicked look, as if the query had sparked some kind of unfavorable memory.

"A new leader arose, one who's morals did not align with what our unification had been built upon." Genesis spoke, however vaguely which was unlike him.

"That's a nice way to put it." Revel retorted. "She was unhinged, like, out of her mind. Like, hit her head too many times as a kit that it left permanent and extreme damage- or something."

"No, I think she was just born that way; corrupted."

"You really think Venus was born that way? Wasn't it you who said we become who we are based on our upbringing and circumstances?" Revel muttered.

Venus, Zinniapool thought. This infamous feline had a name, and she found herself rather curious about her, falling into her own train of thoughts as Revel and Genesis continued to speak to each other like they were having a private conversation and she wasn't there.

"... I'm just saying, you're contradicting yourself."

"No, you just misunderstood. Nature vs. nurture, Revel."

"What did she do?" Zinniapool queried, breaking up the duo's conversation with another invasive question, one which the two seemed a little hesitant to answer.

"She heavily abused her psionic abilities to have order, controlling our unification by fear and condemning those who didn't follow her rules, rules which were dancing around the line of cruelty." The older tabby spoke, each word heavier than the next.

"If you all had these same abilities, why didn't anyone try to stop her?"

"I don't think you understand how *good* she was at inflicting fear, making you see and feel things you weren't. Awful things." Revel

answered, nearly shuddering at his own words.

"And she was very powerful, gifted in a way stronger than I'd ever seen before, and not just because of her abilities. She was quite the gifted manipulator. Ironic that her name means love and beauty and she was the opposite of it. In a society full of psychics, no one was able to feel the corruption which lingered behind a pretty smile."

"I'm sorry." Was all she was able to mutter, nearly pathetically. She couldn't imagine having to leave her clan in a situation like that, the thought of it was painful enough.

"Don't apologize for things out of your control, but let it be a reminder that not everyone is how they present themselves." Genesis corrected, however he placed his tail on her shoulder.

The three stayed like that for awhile, talking amongst themselves during the night's darkest hours. It was comforting, and whatever StarClan had coming for her, she would allow herself this serenity.

Even if it was temporary.

chapter 5

"I swear they only misbehave this badly at the worst times." Dandelionpath had murmured, ear flicking in embarrassment as she placed her paw on Shrewkit's tail to abruptly halt him in place after escaping Eveningleaf's grasp.

"It's alright, don't stress about it. Nothing could ever be worse than Sparrowpurr and Finchfeather when they were about this age, about prepared me for anything to come." Eveningleaf soothed while simultaneously giving Shrewkit his wellness check, the others waiting their turn much more patiently.

"She's not lying." Zinniapool laughed, Robinkit in her care as she did small tests, tests which the medicine cats would do every moon until the kits were apprenticed to make sure nothing was off.

Arumflame, a FallClan elder, occupied the two waiting their turn as they grew impatient, and Dandelionpath was relieved.

"Shrewkit seems to be doing fine, nothing alarming." Eveningleaf spoke, nudging the biggest of the litter to Arumflame who instantly pounced on an unsuspecting Rosekit.

"Robinkit as well." Zinniapool replied almost instantly, letting her eyes linger a little longer on the kit before she nudged him back to his siblings, remembering back to the night he was born and the montage of memories which followed. It made her feel warm, knowing she was somehow allowed the gift of knowledge into his future.

As he joined his siblings, she watched as Eveningleaf had to basically drag Poppykit away from Shrewkit, the two in a hasty little spar as Rosekit hissed from the sidelines, however Arumflame swatted her tail against the kitten mid-hiss to hush her.

"They say Eagle Tooth watches over misbehaving kittens, and comes for them in the night when they refuse to act right." Arumflame

spoke quietly, briefly quieting the kits as Zinniapool motioned Rosekit for her turn.

"Eagle Tooth is not real, he's made up to scare us." Shrewkit retorted, Rosekit nodding in agreement as she absentmindedly did what Zinniapool asked her to.

"Who?" Poppykit questioned, twisting around to face his siblings and Arumflame before Eveningleaf scolded him for moving too much.

"You don't know who Eagle Tooth is?" Rosekit teased, Poppykit only rolling his eyes in response to her snark.

"They say he is the largest cat to roam the forest, much bigger than you and I." Arumflame spoke rather eerily, which worked in keeping the kits quiet.

"Even bigger than Dimglow?" Robinkit questioned, genuinely, as his eyes rounded in wonder.

"Even bigger than Dimglow." The elder answered, leaving the kits to gasp with one another and giggle amongst themselves.

"Why's he called Eagle Tooth then? If he's not an eagle, you know." Poppykit queried, tail curling around his paws.

"Oh I know the answer!" Shrewkit beamed as he jumped on the tips of his paws, looking from Arumflame towards his brother. "It's because he killed an eagle, clawed out his tooth and wore it around his neck as a prize!"

"I don't believe it." Poppykit spoke, his eyes glistening with feigned boredom.

"Eveningleaf, Zinniapool, have either of you seen Eagle Tooth?" Robinkit asked, voice gentler than those of his excitable siblings.

Zinniapool briefly shared eye contact with her former mentor, not wanting to speak until she did.

"Yes, I have seen Eagle Tooth before. He is very real, and very

scary." Eveningleaf spoke, her voice quiet and eyes concentrated as she made Poppykit stick out his tongue and hum.

"Zinniapool?" Rosekit questioned, tilting her head nearly as if she was challenging her brief caretaker as she prompted the medicine cat to answer. *StarClan these kits are such little nuisances.*

"I, yes, yes I've seen him before. He is very big," she paused, watching as Rosekit gave her an unconvinced stare before continuing, "don't look at me like that."

"I believe you." Robinkit spoke, redirecting all stares to him, his siblings rolling their eyes as Shrewkit mumbled something about being a teacher's pet, but she noticed that he didn't seem to mind them.

As Eveningleaf and Zinniapool finished giving the kits their wellness checkups, they returned to the medince cat den while Eveningleaf absentmindedly organized her stash of herbs, counting the ones where she was low.

"Want to go with me to Fishcape to collect a few things?" Eveningleaf spoke, her green eyes fluttering up to meet another pair of eyes which had already been watching her like a hawk.

"Yes, I'd like that." Zinniapool flicked an ear, going to grab a sycamore leaf to hold everything she and her former mentor were about to gather, however she stopped herself and looked back for a moment. "Eveningleaf, has StarClan said anything to you?"

The white-gray medicine cat seemed a little confused by the question, but she didn't let it show for too long as she set down her own leaf to answer.

"They have not, but we aren't really in need of them right now, and that's good. StarClan sets a balance for us, and while we are at equilibrium, our ancestors are quiet." She answered, however a small silence lingered so she pressed on. "*Have you*?"

"No," Zinniapool hastily answered, "just wanted to make sure. That's all."

Eveningleaf's stare lingered for only a few breathless seconds before she gently exhaled, grabbed her leaf and beckoning for her former apprentice to follow with a single flick of her tail.

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Soft sunlight beamed from the midday sun, causing the flowers and grass touched by the radiating light to shine more vibrantly as Zinniapool and Lilacpetal followed the path they knew all too well, this time accompanied by Salem.

She was truly fascinated by the dainty black feline, his mannerisms and the guileful tone of his voice as well as the near hypnotic way he carried himself.

"Were you apart of The Unification, Salem?" Lilacpetal queried, having just learned about the spiritual clan of cats from Zinniapool in which the two were able to be mesmerized together.

"I was not." Salem responded quickly, weaving deftly through the tall grass as the forest thinned out, the other two struggling to keep up with how fast he was moving.

"So you don't know Venus?" Zinniapool asked in turn.

"I know of her." The dainty feline responded, his big yellow eyes burning a near golden hue in the blaring light as he halted and slowly looked behind his shoulder to face the two wide-eyed FallClan cats behind him, their eyes lit up like kits wanting to hear the rest of a story.

"I lived with humans." Salem spoke, a little quieter than usual, however he remained very still while narrowing his gaze. "Since I was born."

"Twolegs?" Lilacpetal asked, his head chimed a little to the side as the black cat in front of them nodded very faintly, Zinniapool wasn't even sure he actually moved. Sometimes she was convinced he didn't even breathe.

"Why did you leave them?" The tabby asked quickly, however she soon realized how invasive it sounded. "I'm sorry, you don't have
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to-"

"Woke up one night to the smell of smoke, granted I was used to that. My humans— *twolegs*— were always mixing different herbs and scents together to cleanse the air. Didn't think much of it, so I fell back asleep." He spoke, finally allowing his body to relax as he properly faced his newfound companions and sat down, thin tail wrapping neatly around his paws.

"Next thing I remember I was being dragged out of the house by these twolegs with protective gear on, so I scrambled away to see my home in flames. It was gone, my humans along with it."

"I'm so sorry." The medicine cat breathed out, her voice a mere whisper, ears pinning in discomfort as thoughts of the same horror happening to her own home came into mind. She couldn't imagine what that was like. She couldn't even handle the thought of it.

"I couldn't imagine going through that." Lilacpetal added in response, his broken tone of voice mimicking her own.

"You think it is unimaginable to experience something so cruel, that you are not strong or capable enough to handle such sorrow, until you're met face to face with it. Then you will see, *you are much stronger than you think."*

She just listened, letting his words seek in as she went over them in her head. She was sure he was wrong, she found herself to be too emotionally weak to handle when disaster struck, but when she really thought it, she had never really experienced anything too traumatic. She still had her family, her mentor, her friends. She was born into a time of prosperity and peace. She was able to pursue her dreams of medicine. Sure she was beginning to have really weird nightmares, if she could even call them that, but she was quickly realizing she never *really* struggled.

She was lucky.

"Spent a few moons on by own, trying to salvage any of my human's belongings for sentimental value, but nothing remained. I had to keep them with me mentally, and to this day I carry them alongside

me still."

"Do you miss them?" Lilacpetal questioned.

"I do, but I can feel their energy. I believe that when we pass on, our energy is restored back into the earth as our souls move on to a plane we differ from."

"*StarClan*." Zinniapool and Lilacpetal murmured in unison.

"One of many." Salem responded, turning tail as he dipped into the grass, the other two following quickly after, having to switch off into a near run to keep up with the fast-paced traveler.

"Genesis and I ran into each other at a celestial event hosted by a family of cats forests from here. Spent nearly all night speaking to him, I had never felt so deeply connected to another being. Felt as though we were on the same wavelength."

Zinniapool knew that feeling very well. She wondered if Genesis just had that affect on others.

"Met Revel the following day, and to my surprise, wasn't too deeply irked the entire time. The little headache held a kind of intelligence I feel others are sometimes too neglectful to notice, or they don't care to even look."

"He's still so young, too." Lilacpetal added.

"Salem, are you gifted? Like the others, I mean." The medicine cat finally asked the question which had been tugging at her the longest, one which seemingly didn't phase him at all as he continued his walk through the sunlit field.

"I believe everyone, mundane or not, is gifted in some way. I do not share the same mental kinetic gift the others have, but I have my own practices. Rituals. Manifestations."

"A witch, or something along those lines?" Zinniapool murmured almost inaudibly, and this caused a low chuckle from the small cat before her.

"It's not a mean word, you can say it." He assured.

She had heard Dimglow use the term before, as an insult. She wasn't entirely sure what it meant, or all it entailed, but she could use context clues.

"Were you born into it? Like, is it something you're born into? Or with?" Lilacpetal questioned, getting more jumpy on his paws, almost like a kit would.

"I suppose you could say I was born into it. However, no. Anyone can choose to practice."

"Really?" He whispered, sage eyes beaming curiously.

"Have you ever been stressed, to a point where you are organizing as a way to calm yourself?" Salem queried, in which the two just nodded, unsure of where this was going.

"A standard cleansing ritual, my friends. That's all we do. Raise and direct energy."

"Interesting." Zinniapool cooed, her voice trailing off as she continued to follow him home as Lilacpetal continued asking questions, questions Salem was answering but the medicine cat was too zoned out to listen to.

She liked Salem, she really did. He was odd, sure. A little reserved, but she appreciated how open-minded he was. He was willing to teach anyone willing to learn.

As the trio returned to camp, Salem and Lilacpetal were met by a few warriors, the kits barreling out of the nursery to speak with them as well. In just a few moons, it seemed as though everyone had grown to love the four new additions of FallClan, even if they were just temporary. Zinniapool branched off to get some sleep, but was halted as she heard almost inaudible words coming from Lightstar's den. As she got closer, she was able to make out her leader's voice as well as the voices of Dimglow and Eveningleaf. They sounded hostile.

She scolded herself for eavesdropping, wondering what Waspwillow

would be saying. Probably something along the lines of minding her own business, but if you were projecting words of secretary, it was your own fault for *projecting them in the first place.* Or at least, that's how Zinniapool justified herself.

"It's been barely two moons, and the clan treats them as if they are the breathing souls of Silverpelt themselves. They're corrupting us, how can you be so blind? *Both of you!"* Dimglow sneered, his tail lashing back and forth in anger. Zinniapool pinned her ears as she watched Eveningleaf do the same, absentmindedly copying the movements of her mentor, something she'd always done, even as a kit.

"You keep saying that, and yet you have no real reason not to trust them. I really think you're complaining just for the sake of hearing yourself talk. How bored must one be-" Eveningleaf was cut off as Dimglow hissed in her face, his eyes slanted terrifyingly sharp but the gray-white medicine cat did not flinch. She didn't move a muscle. Zinniapool could feel herself holding her own breath.

"That's enough." Lightstar scolded, tail flicking his deputy's shoulder in a silent warning, one which Dimglow seemed to reluctantly act upon as he stepped backwards.

"Why are they here, really? We know nothing about them. I'm not saying they are, for sure, up to something. All I am saying is that we were far too quick to allow them into our home. Not only that, but access to our ways. Our traditions. *Our vulnerabilities.* The clan adores them, but maybe that's all they want. Makes it easier for them *if* they are planning something." Dimglow sighed. "All I'm saying is we're not being cautious enough."

"Now you want to sound sensible, so Lightstar will listen to you?" Eveningleaf scorned, her ears so far back it seemed as if she had near none. "Was just yesterday morning you were calling them horrid insults and claiming they were infecting everyone's mind with their— in your opinion— nonconformist ways."

"Not an opinion, it's a fact." Dimglow snapped back.

"No, you are just incapable of believing others can want something

more in life than you, who can have different beliefs than you. Concepts you will forever be too shallow to even *begin* to comprehend." The medicine cat spat, Lightstar seemingly not wanting to interfere with the disagreement happening between his two confidants. Zinniapool didn't blame him, because no matter how much she disliked her deputy, he didn't seem completely wrong. However, she didn't think his intentions were as clean cut as he was making them out to be, and clearly, neither did Eveningleaf.

chapter 6

Spirits were high with the cats of FallClan as Lightstar had named his own two sons in becoming warriors, their titles as followed being Creeksong and Copperpelt. The two had gone off for vigil and everywhere excitement followed, especially from Sparrowpurr to have her first apprentice reach the end of their training.

Zinniapool was proud of her friend, even if the two hadn't been as close the past few moons, she was still cheering her on in silence.

Her life had weirdly changed, and whether that change was good or bad, she wasn't entirely sure. It freaked her out a bit, as if she was becoming more aware of the world around her. Genesis and the others helped, even though she couldn't help but share Dimglow's same suspicion.

Gentle rainfall fell from the dusk sky, a dark blue cascade of stormy clouds streaked across the sky. She could faintly hear the drops splash from leaf to leaf, in sync with her steps as the rain fell freely from her whiskers.

A shy breeze pressed against her tabby fur and she allowed her eyes to close, inhaling all the scents around her. She was consumed with a sense of tranquility, as if the forest was her protector. The lithe she-cat dug her claws into the bark of one of the trees, getting to a height where she could see farther beyond, her eyes narrowing in on the skyline where she could faintly see a figure in the distance. She squinted, but to no avail. All she saw was a silhouette.

Jumping from branch to branch, claws digging into the bark to secure herself before hurling herself onto another with her hindquarters, slowly catching up with the stranger in the beyond, trying to ignore the rain falling into her eyes as the sky swiftly darkened.

With each approaching leap, Zinniapool felt herself grow more wary. She wasn't sure if it was because she was on her own

approaching StarClan knows who, or if it was something else, and yet she found herself still moving towards it.

Them.

Screams. She could hear screams, however they were so quiet. So faint. She didn't know if she was freaking herself out. Maybe it was all in her head.

Flashes.

Claws. Teeth. Pain. Betrayal.

"*Division within the clan."*

Whispers erupted, getting louder as the flashes continued to erupt within her brain, each more graphic than the one before it.

Another image crossed her mind; brown tabby paws, feline flesh between their claws matted with blood.

Then dim yellow eyes, slanted in a way the medicine cat was unable to understand. An emotion which left her sick, and within the fiery eyes of the yellow-gazed feline were the reflections of her own clanmates fighting one another.

Killing one another.

"*You were weak, Lightstar. Always depended on me to do everything for you."*

Zinniapool's ears pinned at this whisper, as if the words were being spoken into her ear were from her own inner voice. It was a sensation she couldn't explain.

The rain fell harder, lightning streaked across the sky, however she wasn't sure if it was real or not.

"*Tyranny."*

"That's what it is called."

"You really expected everyone to betray their leader and submit to you?"

"You've created a war between your own clan."

"They are all dead."

They are all dead.

Zinniapool snapped out of it, wanting to scream but not being able to, her heartbeat screaming in her ears instead as she looked up to the sky to be met by the gentle rainfall once more before redirecting her gaze between the trees, her heart instantly dropping.

Dimglow.

As soon as she realized it was him, the whispers, the flashes, everything pieced together. Her claws were dug so deep into the bark she drew blood, however it didn't cross her mind. Slowly she made her way down the tree, softly leaping into the grass as she nosed through the undergrowth, water slipping off the leaves and drenching her light brown fur. She didn't know what she was doing. Truth be told, she wasn't sure she was forming any kind of coherent thought.

Soon she revealed herself to him, fur on end, copper stare probably looking a little crazed. She just stared at him, and he in turn just tipped his head to the side, his yellow eyes narrowing in on her.

"Shouldn't be out here on your own." He spoke, however she wasn't sure if he sounded apathetic or concerned. Truthfully, she wasn't sure what she understood.

"I know." Was all she could mutter, her eyes not wavering once, not even a single blink.

"Then go back home." He retorted, tail flicking back and forth in a manner that made her uneasy. *What are you doing?* She wasn't sure if she was asking herself or him that.

"That's not what I meant." She responded, her paws glued to the ground. She wasn't sure she could move them, even if she wanted to. She was paralyzed. By fear? She wasn't entirely sure.

"What are you talking about?"

"Salem can help cleanse your mind of the destruction you desire, let him." She replied, her eyes trying to desperately read whatever his expression was going to be, however he remained very still. Very quiet. *Speak, foxheart.*

Nothing. He didn't flinch, his gaze was now just as crazed as her own, neither of them speaking. She almost wondered if time had frozen. Then she wondered if he was just as scared as she was in this moment.

Until, finally, he spoke in a way that felt condescending. Demeaning.

"Still so naïve, clinging onto the lies fed to you. Will you ever grow up, Zinniapool? Your siblings already have, yet here you are partaking in stories and fantasy told to the minds of a kitten, and yet you still believe it. It is pathetic- terrifying even- that you hold, in your very paws, the vitality of your clan once Eveningleaf is gone."

"I can hear them, Dimglow. Feel it. See it. *I know everything."* She held her ground, but watching as he fell into such patronizing laugh, it instantly made her insecure. *What if she was just naïve?*

"You sound crazy, absolutely crazy. Be careful, don't want to make the others fear your mental stability. They might take your rank away from you, *or worse*." Dimglow cooed, circling her as his eyes shown with concern, yet they somehow still appeared so condescending.

She didn't respond, instead she finally broke her gaze away from his own as she grew dizzy from all the circling, instead letting them focus on her paws as she tried to calm the thoughts in her mind, such vile thoughts that she thought to be his, but now she wasn't so sure.

"Run home, kid, and keep your mouth shut if you know what's good for you." He spoke coolly in her ear before aggressively pushing past her and leaving her in the forest where she stayed, unable to

move.

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"Why was Dimglow ever chosen as deputy?" Zinniapool murmured as she organized the different seeds she and her mentor had gathered, keeping her eyes focused on the task she was doing.

"How would I know?" Eveningleaf replied, going through different stashes and putting outdated herbs into a pile she could get rid of later.

"You've always been close with Lightstar, so I just assumed you'd have to'v thought about it." She answered, pinching the leaf with her teeth to weave the stems in between to create a way to contain them.

"Lightstar must've been on catnip."

"Eve, I need you to be serious."

"I am! Really, I can't think of any other reason why anyone in their right mind would choose such a hateful, cold waste of air on a rank so highly valued." She answered, green eyes wandering from herb to herb before she quietly spoke. "Hopefully he'll croak before Lightstar does."

Zinniapool's eyes widened as her own copper stare met her former mentor's, however Eveningleaf just nudged past her playfully.

"I'm just kidding." The older medicine cat reassured, however deep down, Zinniapool hoped he would. She wasn't sure what happened in the woods, but she knew what she saw, and she wouldn't forget it.

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"Revel was absolutely terrified."

"I absolutely *was not."* The young feline snapped.

"What happened next!" Rosekit squealed, the other three of her

siblings surrounding Salem, Genesis and Revel as the travelers told stories to them of their life before stumbling upon FallClan.

Waspwillow, Elysianlily, Arumflame, Lilacpetal and Sootflower all joined in to listen to the travelers as well, seemingly just as engaged as the kits.

Zinniapool kept her distance, but it made her happy to see everyone enjoying themselves, well, everyone except Revel. She chuckled to herself as the young tomcat defended himself on why he apparently found it smart to see how long he could stick his tail in a fire, and not a single of his excuses really held out. He tried though, she'd give him that. Had everyone gathered laughing their tails off, so at least his past misery was easy entertainment now. From what she could tell, he seemed to be enjoying the attention.

She let herself listen for a little while longer before heading back to her den, an unfamiliar yet strangely uncanny noise being heard. As she stepped in, Zinniapool's eyes widened as she saw the medicine cat den completely trashed, herbs shredded and lying all over the den's floor.

Frantically she looked up to be met with fiery, hysterical golden amber eyes, and Zinniapool watched as a few marigold stems flew from one side to the other, her jaw dropping in disbelief before looking back at the panicked calico before her.

Eden.

She didn't know how to console her, so the medicine cat held her ground, her eyes just frantically dancing around the chaos of her den, the herbs flying out everywhere and Eden crouched down in a small corner of the cavern, face dug into her paws.

"Eden." A gentle voice spoke, and Zinniapool swiftly turned her head to see Genesis enter the den, Salem and Revel keeping the others occupied as the older tomcat approached the calico.

"Eden, breathe. You are okay."

"I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm sorry." She kept whispering over and over,

finally lifting her head from her paws, ears pinned back as her gaze flicked back and fourth between Zinniapool and Genesis. It was the first time Zinniapool could recall the multicolored she-cat ever taking a notice of her existence.

"Don't apologize, you did nothing wrong." He reassured, laying his tail gently on her shoulder. "Remember what we talked about."

"The morning birds."

"Yes, Eden. The morning birds. Focus on the sound, the way it makes you feel, envision it. Focus."

She nodded, her heartbeat getting noticeably more stable as she very faintly swayed back and forth, her eyes closing as Genesis demonstrated breathing exercises for her to do.

Zinniapool just watched in utter silence, not really sure what to make of anything. Suddenly everything felt much more quiet as the two cats before her synced their breathing and Genesis motioned for Revel and Salem to enter.

"Come on, Eden. It's a crescent moon tonight, your favorite. You can't miss sunset!" Revel chirped, very gently nudging her chin as she shakily stood to her paws alongside Genesis. After gaining her composure, she followed Revel and Salem outside, and the medicine cat just watched with, she assumed, an unreadable expression on her face.

"Eden was apart of a group, a society no less, similar to your own clan in a sense." Genesis spoke, which Zinniapool was not expecting. She redirected her gaze from the exit of her den back towards the older feline, an unreadable look still on her face.

"It was called the Paragon Dynasty, however unlike The Unification, these cats were mundane." He continued on, his eyes set on his paws as he absentmindedly started cleaning the mess Eden had left behind while continuing his story.

"You don't have to." Zinniapool spoke, whispered really, but he didn't hear. That, or he simply wasn't listening as he continued

anyways.

"Not Eden though. She was special. Psionic, like us, and yet she held a type of energy I'd never felt before. Something strong. I wasn't sure anything like it really existed until I met her." Genesis spoke, his tail sweeping the herbs into piles which could be saved and piles of ones too destroyed.

"She was psychokinetic, able to manipulate certain objects with the simple use of her mind."

Zinniapool backed her head in shock, her jaw still agape as she took in what he said, her ears fully perked.

"With no one to guide her, these abilities went untamed, it was too much energy for someone so young to have to handle without guidance. Without a mentor." He sighed, and for once, the medicine cat noticed something in him she hadn't really seen before.

He seemed melancholic, which was nothing like him.

"She had set something to fire within her home, accidentally wounding some of the residents. They were horrified by her actions, thought she was some evil-possessed entity. She was set to be executed."

Zinniapool felt chills run down every limb of her body, ears lying back as she pictured the calico in the situation, then picturing herself. It all rolled back around to what Salem had said to her and Lilacpetal.

"I was drawn to her, and luckily, I was able to get her out in time. I'm not sure what Eden was like before that event, but I know it changed her completely. She's just scared. She doesn't wanna hurt anyone." Genesis spoke, suddenly pausing what he was doing as he stared off into space.

"There's so many cats out there who are suffering, just like Eden, and with no one to help them."

"You can't beat yourself up over that, some things are out of our control." Zinniapool assured, resulting in him chuckling sadly as he

finally met her gaze.

"Never thought you'd be the one giving me advice, little healer." He heaved, inhaling and exhaling gently.

"I'm full of surprises." She smiled.

"That you are."

chapter 7

Zinniapool didn't want to live her life in fear. She didn't understand anything, despite learning more everyday. She had always been someone full of life, that's how she was described when her mother would excitably talk about her to her friends. She liked that others perceived her that way. She held identity in her connection to everything around her.

The initial sixth sense she always had that others lacked never made her feel outcasted, until she was given those dire messages from Ravenrose during her sleep. Genesis was able to console her, but nothing could've prepared her for what she saw with Dimglow.

Days had passed and she had stuck by Eveningleaf's side, finding comfort in her mentor, but also someone she felt the most connected to. It was as if she had a mentor, friend and mother all in one, not that she was in need of any of those, but it was nice nonetheless.

Today felt different. Birdsong had gently rose her from sleep but the morning sunlight was blocked by a face nudged into her own, wide amber eyes staring widely into her own.

"Elysianlily, get out of my face." The medicine cat grumbled, rolling to her side to put distance between her and her sister. To no avail, she was quickly learning. Elysianlily leaped over her sister, tail swatting her shoulder as she did so.

"Come on! You've been hiding away like a cicada for days. I'm bored." The multicolored feline exclaimed, flopping down to her side to be at a more even length with her sibling.

"She's right, you're fossilizing before my very eyes." A very distinct voice chimed in much more smugly; Sparrowpurr.

"Let's go for a walk, Lilacpetal is waiting outside the den. We can get you new bedding as well, your nest smells." Elysianlily added,

which resulted in the medicine cat giving her an annoyed scoff before finally pulling herself up.

"It's a StarClan miracle." Sparrowpurr teased.

"Watch it." The tabby hissed, however her friend only laughed in response, nudging her shoulder before leading the trio outside where they were met with Lilacpetal.

"The bear is out of hibernation!" He mused, however Zinniapool didn't find him funny.

"And this bear is about to make sure none of you see the light of another day."

"So grumpy, and you're always getting onto me for being so serious." Her sister commented, lightheartedly, so she didn't respond as she followed the group outside, very reluctantly.

Zinniapool was attentive at first, watching Sparrowpurr and Lilacpetal bicker back and fourth about some argument they had as kits as Elysianlily laughed, the two trying to make her pick a side in the matter but the calico stayed neutral. The bickering turned physical as Lilacpetal gently bit his friend's ear, the large russet she-cat retaliating by pinning him down and the two just kept rolling around clumsily, matting their fur in the process.

"How mature." Elysianlily purred, looking back to her sister to see if she was finding any entertainment, but she held no reaction.

Lilacpetal finally surrendered which resulted in Sparrowpurr purring proudly, her tail swaying back and fourth as she took lead of the four friends.

Zinniapool didn't say much, she didn't have it in her, and it seemed as though her friends and sister finally got the picture as they just decided to talk amongst themselves, occasionally looking back to make sure she was still following.

She listened to their conversations for a little while but eventually drowned them out, instead focusing on the wind swaying against bare trees and the sound of very faint foliage rustle. Birds flew

overhead, a mated pair, who seemed to dance in the sky. It was a freedom she seemed to yearn for these days.

Eventually she was able to fully quiet the voices of her companies, and at first she was glad, but it suddenly stirred an uneasy feeling in her chest. The tabby looked up for the first time, and to her horror, her friends and Elysianlily were gone.

The wind had stilled, the birds had quieted. Everything was uncanny and all she was left with was the sound of her own heartbeat.

"Elysianlily," she paused slowly, "Lilacpetal!"

Her panic was beginning to grow as she quickened her pace, eyes looking around frantically for the others, but they were gone. Not even their scents remained, which seemed impossible. She was with them, she was sure of it, only moments prior.

"Sparrowpurr!" She screamed again, much more panicked, trying not to choke on the sobs burning in her throat as the fur on the edge of her neck rose, her skin electrified with burning sensations.

She was running now, picking up pace, everything rushing past her in a blur as she kicked up dirt behind her, cutting her skin with loose thorns and low-hanging branches, but she blocked it out as she made her way home, praying to StarClan, anyone, hoping someone was listening to her.

Relief began to settle as she saw the outline of FallClan's camp, picking up speed before abruptly halting at the entrance and quickly entering, glad to see her clan all together.

However Elysianlily, Sparrowpurr and Lilacpetal were there. But how? There's no way they could've gotten here unless they left her and returned home at the same adrenaline-spiked speeds as herself.

She quickly realized her clan was surrounding something, looks of disbelief and horror on the faces of some, others with much sadder looks.

"Ely, what's going on?" The medicine cat questioned, looking

desperately at her saddened sister, but Elysianlily didn't seem to acknowledge she was there. Zinniapool tilted her head in confusion before looking back at her surrounded clan and nosing her way through, only to be met with herself, crying over a hidden figure before her. She tried to get a better look, but before she knew it, she was back in the forest, joined by a laughing trio of Sparrowpurr, Lilacpetal and Elysianlily.

Horror filled her chest, and she knew something was wrong. Something was so incredibly wrong.

"We have to go back."

"Huh?" Sparrowpurr questioned, not hearing what her friend had said as the other two stopped mid-conversation to look at Zinniapool.

"We have to go home, *right now."*

"Why?" Elysianlily questioned, concern creeping behind her soft amber eyes, that same concern now filling Lilacpetal's green stare.

"We just do, don't ask. Please, just come on."

"Okay, okay. Let's go." Elysianlily answered, nodding as she spoke, reassuringly nudging her sister's cheek as Lilacpetal nodded with her. Sparrowpurr was the only one audibly annoyed as she groaned, but reluctantly gave in.

Zinniapool quickly thanked them before she lead the way home, walking abnormally fast, however no one complained, well, no one but Sparrowpurr who was grumbling the entire way home.

She was debating if she even wanted to walk into camp, terrified of what might greet her, the anxiety rushing up and down her chest, she was scared she was gonna stress her heart out by how hard it was beating, but she didn't dwell on it too much as the group finally made it home and she burst through.

Her clan, as expected, was huddled around something.

Someone.

She was about to see what it was until she was met by her parents, Waspwillow and Sageflight as well as her brother, Laurelfrost. Her mother appeared to be in complete distress.

"Zinniapool, just hold on." Sageflight spoke, blocking her view as his eyes shone with a look she hated.

"Let me see."

"Zinniapool, love, listen to your father." Waspwillow reasoned, her amber eyes damp.

"*I want to see."*

"Just let her, she's going to find out either way." Laurelfrost spoke, his copper eyes glaring with the stares of his conflicted parents, until they sighed reluctantly and let her through.

The alarm set in. Zinniapool didn't pay her family any attention as she walked up to her clan, and to her utter surprise, they all looked at her with a look she couldn't describe. Sympathy maybe? She hated it.

They all parted for her, and everything went completely silent.

Until she saw it.

Her.

"No." She breathed out, backing up in utter shock as she looked frantically to her mother, who only broke into more sobs.

"*No*." She said deeper, this time with a pain she's never heard lace her voice before.

"Zinniapool." Lightstar said softly, looking at her with a look of pity. She wanted to claw it right off his face.

"No." She said once more, her voice breaking.

Before her lay her mentor. Her friend. Her partner. The one who taught her everything she knew. The one who calmed her during

her worsts nightmares. The one who would help her through every little thing, no matter how busy she was, no matter how unconventional it was for her. The one who believed her. *Believed in her.*

Eveningleaf.

She was dead, a deep wound sliced through her neck, blood staining her once white-and-gray fur.

"How did this happen?" Sageflight asked, although everyone knew it was a stupid question.

Everyone knew what happened.

She was murdered.

"The question we should be asking, is who did it." Finchfeather spoke, a distain coating her voice.

"Lightstar, do you think it was someone in the clan?" Sootflower asked, gently, concern evident in her amber eyes, but Lightstar seemed unsure of what to say, unsure of what to do in a matter such as this.

"Had to'v been, she was found in her den." Creeksong commented.

"Enough!" Zinniapool snarled as she looked at her clan with a burning fury, ears flattened to her skull, standing over her dead mentor as if she was protecting her from something.

"Zinniapool." Elysianlily spoke, her voice soft as she tried to nudge her distressed sister, but the medicine cat swatted her away.

"Don't touch me!" She hissed.

"Leave her be." Genesis mewed, the clan quieting as they stared at him, little Revel standing beside him as he looked at Zinniapool with sympathy.

"We have to prepare her body for vigil." Sandcurl retorted.

"I said *leave her be."* Genesis snapped, his voice holding a type of authority that it never held before.

Sandcurl seemed as if he was about to protest, but went against it as Dandelionpath glared at him.

At this, Zinniapool felt herself collapse, nuzzling herself into Eveningleaf, trying to delude herself in hearing her heartbeat but to no avail. Her body was cold. It was lifeless.

"Let's give her time." Lightstar said, quietly, but no one moved.

"Move!" Sparrowpurr hissed, and at this the clan parted, some giving a few final looks as they left Zinniapool to lay by her mentor's side in the center of camp.

There she stayed through the night, not sleeping once, as she listened to her heartbeat and pretended it was Eveningleaf's. Her eyes remained opened, only blinking when they'd grow dry. She noticed the way her clan watched, heard the whispers, the gossip.

"*They're really gonna leave her like this?"*

"Going to smell if they don't dispose of the body soon."

"No one's seriously going to do anything?"

She learned to drown them out.

Soon she fell asleep, graced with a dream for the first time in moons.

A memory.

"Eve, it's happening! It's happening!" Zinniapaw beamed, nudging her mentor out of her den as the two laughed.

"Okay okay, calm down." Eveningleaf laughed, stepping outside the medicine cat den as they joined their clan. "Did you get the unakite?" She asked.

"No." Zinniapaw spoke, staring at her mentor in fear but Eveningleaf just

rolled her eyes lightheartedly as she ran back to the den. A few seconds later she appeared, a green-reddish-orange stone in her jaws as she stood beside her apprentice.

"Now remember, don't look-"

"Don't look at the sky until the moon is fully covering the sun, I know I know!" Zinniapaw spoke, already noticing as the world around her grew darker and darker.

It was a solar eclipse, an event that happened so rarely, few were lucky to even get to experience it once in a lifetime. The unakite was a stone used by the medicine cats before her, it's properties enhanced by the celestial event. An opening of spiritual vision and healing, bringing together the balance of one's mentality and emotions.

Lightstar approached the pair with a cupped leaf, woven together with sticks and sap made by the apprentices in use to hold water. Eveningleaf thanked him as she placed the stone into the water, the rest of the clan surrounding the leader and medicine cats.

"Cats of Silverpelt, we thank you for the great prosperity brought to our forests, to the seeds still blooming, we thank you for the prey you've gifted us and we thank them in turn, we thank you for the time of good health. We thank you for the unity of our clan, the differing of our clanmates, the talents one possesses, the individual journeys of each, the stories made and the stories told. We ask for guidance, to keep our paths illuminated by your light, our ancestors, and to keep the balance between all." Eveningleaf spoke, the clan humming in a quiet melody which is learned in early kithood.

Zinniapaw could feel chills run down each limb as she closed her eyes, humming with her clanmates as she took in each word her mentor said.

"You may look." Eveningleaf spoke, her voice nearly angelic.

Zinniapaw opened her eyes, pupils instantly dilating as she stared at a sight for sore eyes. The moon was placed in front of the sun, with the light just barely peaking through to create a near-like crescent moon, and yet it was circular. It was mesmeric. The sky was tinted a much darker blue, except for where the moon and sun emerged, creating a

beautiful orange-red border which shone dimly.

It was strange what followed, as if it was a near awareness which seemed to settle within the very depths of who she was, the very core of her individual self and her connection to the world around her.

Peace of mind.

Zinniapaw sighed in serenity, watching as the moon began to move away from the sun. She closed her eyes and leaned into her mentor. Eveningleaf then rested her head on her apprentice in turn.

Connection.

It was all life was about.

To love and be loved.

Zinniapool awoke, a small smile still woven faintly on her face. She hadn't felt peace like this in moons, it almost felt foreign.

As she opened her eyes, Zinniapool noticed her mentor's body was gone, and not just her, everyone was gone.

The medicine cat looked around in confusion before she cautiously approached her den, growing uneasy as she slowly stepped in only to be met with more horror, a feeling she was all too familiar with.

Before her lay a dead Eveningleaf, neck sliced, and stood above her was Dimglow, a bloodied, sharpened stone held between his gritted crimson-stained teeth. She watched as he stared down at the lifeless body before him before sneaking out in a hidden exit which lead to the outside world instead of camp, leaving Zinniapool to watch in terror as her paws began to shake.

Her attention was then brought to another sight.

A monarch butterfly which gracefully fluttered into her vision, landing on the nose of her dead mentor, a near and very faint glow illuminating its wings. She tilted her head, very slowly stepping forward, ignoring the well in her eyes as her jaw slightly gapped open.

She startled as the butterfly rose once more, fluttering towards a small indent in the medicine cat den where the unakite was placed, and Zinniapool felt herself choke before it then flew towards her, gently landing on her nose. She narrowed her eyes to look at the little thing.

Realization.

Zinniapool knew she was about to burst, but she held it together as her ears perked up.

"*Hi Eveningleaf.*" She whispered, laughing painfully before the butterfly disappeared, leaving a flurry of dahlias in its wake, their dying petals landing at her paws.

Reality.

The smell of rotting flesh stung her nose and her copper stare immediately snapped open, an unknown look shining vibrantly within them.

Zinniapool pulled herself up, tail violently lashing back and fourth as she stared down at Eveningleaf's dead body, her jaw trembling from a growing anger.

She redirected her eyes up to the night sky, the full moon shining vividly, reflecting in her hysterical gaze. If it were any other night, her and Eveningleaf would be meeting with the other medicine cats from the differing clans, but this wasn't any other night.

She looked around, her teeth bared so harshly she thought they might shatter, to see her clan sound asleep. To see *him* sound asleep.

Zinniapool backed away, looking down to see her mentor's dried blood matted into her fur, and she released a deafening yowl, tainted with a malice she was foreign to.

Others began to wake, looking around tiredly, some slowly leaving their dens in confusion. She looked at them, one by one, inaudible voices screaming in her head. Her claws were digging into the ground beneath her as she whispered "make it stop" over and over,

pacing back and fourth as leaves began to rip from their stems, flurrying around frantically.

"What's going on?" A confused voice spoke out.

"Zinniapool!"

The medicine cat snapped her head up, copper eyes instantly meeting with a panicked blue. Genesis.

She was heaving now, looking around to see her clan staring at her in fear before she looked at her paws.

"Zinniapool." He said once more, calmer this time. She met his gaze.

"Come with me." He mewed and she just nodded, defeated as she followed him, Revel and Salem distracting the rest of the clan as Eden followed after the pair.

"What's happening to me!" She cried out, swaying back and fourth in an attempt to calm herself, something she tend to do as a kit but grew out of.

"Breathe." Genesis soothed, rocking back and fourth with her, matching her pace as he demonstrated. She breathed with him, though her's were much more hitched and shaky, she eventually was able to calm herself.

"You are okay. I promise." He reassured.

"I know. I know something. *I was shown something."* She clarified, nodding her head with every word she was saying, which he seemed to mimic as a way of showing he was fully attentive to every word she was saying.

"What did you see?" He asked, gently.

"It was Dimglow. StarClan, I should've known this would happen!" She hissed, and in turn, sent another frenzy of leaves. She looked around, panicked, and Genesis had to place his tail on her shoulder to remind her to stay calm.

"What is happening to me?"

"I told you, when I first got here, that you had a gift, something your ancestors feared, a gift I told you I had seen before." He explained, and she just nodded, unable to form words.

"You are like me." A soft-spoken voice said, a voice Zinniapool wasn't even sure she was hearing correctly, as she broke away her gaze from him to look at Eden, the calico's eyes shining warmly in the bright moonlight.

"It's nothing to be afraid of." Genesis assured.

"What do I do?" She asked finally after a lingering silence, yearning for comfort.

"You breathe. I will help you. Guide you. It doesn't have to be scary, you just have to learn control. Your ancestors will grow to understand." He mewed.

"And what I saw-"

"I know. I saw it too. Your clan won't understand, this matter lays in the paws of your ancestors and shouldn't be your burden to bear. Have faith." The older feline explained, and she inhaled shakily.

"Coming from someone who thought my world was actually crashing, trust me when I say to trust him." Eden added.

"I do," Zinniapool spoke, "more than you know."

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Just wanted to say, I started Mind Over Matter over a year ago, and for so long only had four chapters published when Grim Hollow was finished in less time than that and was nine times the size.

I've had such a hard time writing this story, not being interested in it anymore, but I'm so glad I finally powered through because it's been such a long time that I've written a chapter I was actually proud of, and I am very proud of this one. I fell in love with the story again, and Zinniapool.

That being said, thank you for reading! Any and all feedback is appreciated.

chapter 8

A lot can happen in four moons. It doesn't feel that long when you live through it, but looking back, it feels like it could've been a lifetime.

Zinniapool struggled losing Eveningleaf, there were days she wasn't sure she'd be able to even reach peace. She never felt inferior as a medicine cat, she'd always been good at it, but suddenly being the only one in her position placed a foreign anxiety on her. She had no one to turn to. It all fell into her paws.

Within those four moons, she received Robinpaw as an apprentice. It was expected, but she pretended to be surprised.

Genesis was helpful. He guided her through her grief, gave her hope when she felt there was none left. He also aided in teaching her how to control her newfound gift, which she was learning wasn't all that scary. He was right. He always seemed to be.

Eden was opening up more, too. The calico had this whole other side to her. Zinniapool was more than grateful that she was allowed to see the walls slowly come down. She was sure her calico counterpart was eased to know there were more like her.

FallClan cats were returning from some huge hunting expedition. They had left days ago, and things had been quiet in their absence, but from the commotion outside, the medicine cat figured they were home.

"Come on, Robinpaw." She murmured, nosing the little apprentice out of their den as she looked up to get a better look.

"They're back! They're back!" Rosepaw squealed, her lively eyes shining as warriors peaked their heads outside their den, Lightstar and Sootflower coming out of their own cavern to greet the returning hunters.

The hunting party seemed to be a success with huge nature-crafted casing piling out with prey, tired yet triumphant looks on their faces.

"Dimglow, you never disappoint." Lightstar purred, meeting up with his deputy who was also the head of the hunter's party.

Zinniapool scoffed.

Robinpaw gave her a weird look.

The medicine cat nosed through her clanmates before her eyes locked on a nasty bite on Sparrowpurr's shoulder, one which seemed to be infected. If it was causing the headstrong warrior any pain, she surely wasn't showing it.

"What happened?"

"Rat attack. Nasty little things, but don't worry, they got the worst of it." Sparrowpurr boasted, pushing her shoulder down as if she was trying to show it off.

"Come with me, you're going to get sick."

Luckily the russet warrior didn't argue against her, so Zinniapool led her inside the medicine cat den as she grabbed some marigold before nosing around for another herb which she was beginning to worry she didn't have.

"Looking for this?" Robinpaw queried as he pushed some burdock roots towards her.

"You are a life saver, yes, thank you. Clean them off and-"

"Chew them into a pulp. I know." Robinpaw answered, smiling softly as he did what was asked of him.

"It's been well past six moons and those freeloaders are still here. They don't even do anything but tell made up stories to the clan. I never took Lightstar to be gullible but I'm starting to think he is." Sparrowpurr ranted tactlessly, not seeming to notice the uncomfortable shift in the air. "Are they ever going to leave?"

Zinniapool froze momentarily, quickly reminding herself to remain calm as she gave her friend a discouraging stare and grabbed the chewed up roots and motioned for the russet she-cat to eat them.

"Why do you think that?"

"Dimglow had just mentioned it on patrol, and he made so many valid points. But even before that, I never wanted them here. I mean really, have they done anything useful for us? They don't hunt, they don't patrol, they just... talk." Sparrowpurr rambled while simultaneously grimacing from the taste of the pulp.

"They've been very helpful to me." Zinniapool spoke flatly, and a flicker of something she couldn't really make out danced within her injured friend's eyes.

"Listen Zin, I get they helped you get over Eveningleaf and all, but anyone can do that. Still doesn't change the fact that they're useless."

She was mad now, her heartbeat quickening. All her life she had been someone who cried when angry, or just hyperventilated, and she hated herself for never being able to handle it. Made her feel weak. But losing her mentor had hardened her.

"Like who? Honestly Sparrowpurr? Because you were never there, and I thought we were friends. You haven't had a real conversation with me in moons. And besides, it's not just the grief they guided me through, and if you had even cared to be there, maybe I would've told you like we told each other things when we were younger."

"You can't seriously be blaming this on me?" Sparrowpurr spat, both of the she-cats ignoring Robinpaw who was awkwardly disorganizing and organizing herbs to give him something to do. "You never asked for my help. I'm not a mind reader."

"I shouldn't have to ask!" Zinniapool defended, chest heaving in and out as she held her friend's fiery gaze. Silence followed and the russet she-cat before her seemed winded, unsure of what to say.

"Just leave, Sparrowpurr." The medicine cat ordered, sighing in defeat as she looked away, the fight which previously burned within her dissipating.

"I'm actually injured. Don't let your feelings cloud your judgement."

"Oh please, you're fine. Just stay out of patrols for the next few days and while you're at it, stay out of my fur."

Sparrowpurr just stared at her, and Zinniapool didn't miss the flicker of hurt which peaked from beneath her russet friend's eyes but alas, she left, leaving the medicine cat in a wake of sudden exhaustion.

"You wanna talk about it?" Robinpaw asked uncomfortably.

"No."

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"Do you really have to leave? I can't do this on my own." Zinniapool reasoned as she looked at the four travelers ahead of her. She always knew they weren't here to stay permanently, but she never really thought about what life would look like once they were gone, and without Eveningleaf she had no idea who she'd find comfort in.

"You don't need us anymore." Genesis answered and she relished in the calmness of his voice, knowing it'd be the last she'd probably ever hear it. That thought hurt. "I have taught you everything I can, and I'm not worried at all. You will be fine, you just have to trust me, and trust yourself."

"At least you didn't set things on fire and nearly get sent to public execution. I'd say you are doing just fine!" Revel chirped, causing the calico beside him to grow rigid. He didn't notice.

"Excuse Revel, he's yet to gain any sense of awareness." Eden uncomfortably spoke, making the younger feline look at her with an offended stare that she ignored. "But he's not entirely wrong. You mastered it faster than I ever did."

"Will I ever see any of you again?" The medicine cat asked, the
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sadness tainting her thin voice making the four before her soak in her melancholy.

"Probably not, my friend. But we will carry you with us everywhere, *in here*." Salem spoke bleakly, pressing his tail to her temple to showcase what "here" was.

"It was your presence that brought us here all those moons ago, and I'm very grateful that I was allowed to meet you and be a mentor for you." Genesis soothed, quickly adding onto that thought. "Not that I could ever replace Eveningleaf."

"You changed my life, all of you. Thank you." She exhaled with more vigor than she had expected, already missing them even though they were still here. She was forcing herself to relish in their presence, which irked her. She couldn't even enjoy it. It was a bitter feeling.

"The future has always been subjective, Zinniapool. It's not written in stone and it changes all the time. Your gifts give you the power to change it with knowledge. You shouldn't be burdened with such responsibility so young, but the universe must've figured you could handle it. The fate of your clan lies in your paws." Eden explained, the urgency of her words nearly hidden beneath her soft voice.

At that, Zinniapool bid her farewells to the travelers, forcing herself to be strong as she watched Lightstar and the others send them off. The mood in camp had dimmed with their absence, nearly everyone upset to see them go.

That night she tossed and turned, so many different thoughts and scenarios running rampant in her mind. Sleep didn't greet her like it normally would. Ravenrose's words were burned in her mind. Dimglow's thoughts ran like a wildfire through every thought. If what she was shown were true, anarchy would be greeting her clan very soon and division would follow. If StarClan wasn't going to do their job, she was going to have to do it for them.

But how?

Morning sunlight bled through her cavern, red-hued illumination

coloring her herbs in an eerie shade. She looked towards her sleeping apprentice, watching the small rise and fall of his chest as he slept peacefully. Something instinctual took over her, a sense of protectiveness. All her life she had been the one who sought comfort and safe haven in others, but she wasn't little anymore. She had responsibilities now and she *knew* had it been Eveningleaf in her position, her mentor would do whatever it took to protect her clan and ensure she had a future in it.

She was Robinpaw's Eveningleaf.

Zinniapool stepped outside of the medicine cat den, allowing the warm breeze to press against her fur as she watched her clan begin to stir. She eyed the red sun which burned against the horizon and swallowed her fear and calmed the shaking of her paws and the tremble of her jaw as she approached the Highledge.

She stepped upon it, tipping her chin and feigning confidence until she could delude herself that she wasn't absolutely terrified.

"Cats of FallClan," her voice called out, thankfully sounding more assertive than she thought it would, "gather below the Highledge for a clan meeting."

She watched as her awaking clanmates looked at each other with confused glances, questioning murmurs rippling from them as they hesitantly complied. Lightstar and Sootflower stepped out of the leader's den, sharing an unsure look as the leader's mate whispered some kind of question in his ear, but her leader just shrugged unknowingly as they settled beneath the Highledge.

"What's going on?" She heard Arumflame mutter tiredly to Waspwillow, but her mother just shook her head in silent answer.

"Zinniapool, what is this?" Lightstar asked and she didn't miss the ways his paws anxiously fidgeted or the brittle look in his blue eyes.

"I have been shown something." She answered quickly, letting her gaze rest with her leader's before redirecting her ecru eyes to the deputy who looked satisfyingly nervous. "A presage about Dimglow, and his vile thoughts about FallClan and what he plans to do with

it."

Shocked murmurs rippled from below and she watched as Otterfur, who had been sat beside him, awkwardly shuffled away.

"Oh, you gullible little brat. You think you're all enlightened now, is that what it is? Those freeloaders festered your brain, just like I said they would."

"Dimglow, silence." Lightstar immediately commanded and the pained look on the deputy's face was more than gratifying. "Zinniapool, was this a message from StarClan? An omen? What did they say?"

She was stunted for a moment, briefly remembering back to what the deputy had said back in the forest.

"*You sound crazy, absolutely crazy. Be careful, don't want to make the others fear your mental stability. They might take your rank away, or worse."*

Or worse.

Lightstar was not cruel. He was not unfair. Surely he wouldn't do something horrible to her, surely he wouldn't think she was crazy. But then again, this wasn't some omen from StarClan. They weren't on her side. This was something foreign to her clan, she knew that, but she also knew what she saw. What she heard.

"You will be fine, you just have to trust me, and trust yourself."

These voices were fighting back and fourth in her mind, but alas she figured if there was going to be someone who's word she went with, it would be Genesis. It would be herself.

Trust yourself.

"This was not an omen. I was in the forest, and I heard things from Dimglow. His thoughts. *I heard them clear as day."*

"What kind of things?" Sageflight, her father, delicately asked from where he stood beside her mother. She could already tell her clan

was growing ruffled.

"You sound insane!" Dimglow hissed, but he was silenced by Lightstar once again.

"Division within the clan. A civil war. Anarchy which bleeds into tyranny. FallClan as we know it cursed! I saw it, with my own eyes." She was panting now, eyes dancing around the judgmental stares from her clanmates as she continued vigorously, narrowing her eyes on her leader. "Dimglow will be your downfall Lightstar, and in turn, he will condemn FallClan."

Silence.

"You have to believe me! This *will* come to pass, unless we settle upon another course."

"Zinniapool." She heard Elysianlily gently murmur, her sister's eyes shining fearfully for what the medicine cat was coming to. *No, Ely, not you. You have to believe me.*

"He killed Eveningleaf! Killed her in cold blood, and he will continue to hurt anyone who speaks against him. I know what I saw!" She tried to reason, but it was beginning to lose merit. Hope was withering away.

Silence followed once more, and she could tell she was losing her nerve as the pressure inside her skull began to cave in. Critical retorts followed and she could feel the air shift as the vermillion glow of the sun halfway covered the deputy. Her teeth bared. *Breathe. Breathe.*

Zinniapool closed her eyes as the light became blinding, staggering backwards before forcing her eyes open once more, feeling a pit form in her stomach as her eyes gapped open manically as she stared down to see her clanmates slaughtered, their bodies circling a bloodied Dimglow who stood triumphantly in the middle, his slitted eyes staring tauntingly into her own.

"No." She breathlessly hitched as the medicine cat shook her head, however once her vision refocused, her clanmates were fine as they

stared blankly at her, seemingly unsure what to do. Even breathing felt wrong.

"She's lost her mind." Finchfeather spoke, her high-pitched voice sounding like claws against stone from where she stood beside Sparrowpurr who didn't even come to her friend's defense.

"Lightstar, what did I tell you? Those travelers have turned her against us!" Dimglow sneered, his dark yellow stare burning menacingly into his leader's eyes. Lightstar appeared utterly gutted as his eyes danced from his deputy to his medicine cat.

"Okay let's just," Waspwillow paused, panicked, trying to find anything to serve as damage control, "she's just lost Eveningleaf, let's be civil here." Her mother reasoned, but Zinniapool just scoffed at this.

"Yes mother, I did lose her." She sneered, her claws digging into the ledge she stood upon as her fiery eyes burned into the deputy. "*Because of him."*

She didn't notice her sister was beside her from the sapped staring contest going on between the two of them until she felt Elysianlily ushering her down. "Come on, Zin. Let's just cool off somewhere."

"Ely stop!" She cried, forcing her ghastly gaze from him to her, her pupils switching hysterically from each of the calico's amber eyes. "You're supposed to have my back."

"I do, you know I do." Her sister lulled despite the fear which sauntered all over her face as she briefly glanced at her angered clan. "Things just need to calm down, okay? Please, *please* follow me."

Zinniapool held her gaze for an excruciatingly long time, the wildfire which had burned within her crazed eyes finally fading as she bowed her head in defeat and groggily leaned against her sister as she guided her down the Highledge and directed her to the medicine cat den where her mother quickly followed suit, forcing herself to drown out the immediate discourse that followed from her clanmates outside.

"What was that?" Waspwillow immediately whispered, her mother's composure finally bleeding away into anger. "You have a reputation to uphold Zinniapool, accusations like that are detrimental!"

"You think I'm lying?" The medicine cat strained, looking around in disbelief as she curled her tongue over her teeth, stepping back and fourth rapidly in an attempt to calm herself. It didn't work.

"No, no I don't." Waspwillow sighed. "I don't doubt you *think* you saw what you did, but you've always had a large imagination. It's what makes you, you. But I fear you've let this manifest your reality."

"No!" She hissed, pacing back and fourth. "No! No! No! *You are all going to die!"* She yelled, stopping to look her mother dead in the eyes. "And no one is listening to me!"

"We are, Zin. We are." Elysianlily calmed, resting her tail on her sister's shoulder but the medicine cat just swatted her away and curled up in the corner, eyes fixating on her shivering paws.

"No, *you're not."*

chapter 9

Something pacific settled over Zinniapool as she stayed tucked in her corner of the medicine cat den, denying Robinpaw or anyone the right to enter. Not that anyone really wanted to be around her. She could hear them talking about her, saying she'd gone crazy. Muttering something about being indoctrinated. *If only they knew how dense they sounded.*

She could think clearer now, and she *knew* with everything she had in her that she wasn't crazy. She knew what she saw. Genesis saw it too, but he was gone. This was something she was going to have to face alone, and fix alone. She was on her own.

She was okay with that now. Or maybe she really was losing her mind because she felt unequivocally at peace as opposed to her outburst earlier in the morning. A calm before a storm, she supposed. Despite her serene composure, something deep within her core was telling her that something dire was bubbling in the ensuing events that were about to take place.

Zinniapool eyed Dimglow from where she lay, not moving an inch as she let one paw drape over the other, her ears pointed and face absolutely void of any ardor. Her eyes slitted ever-so-slightly. She debated momentarily, wondering if she should pray to StarClan for help in doing whatever it was she was about to do, but that felt futile. StarClan had abandoned her, that much was clear.

Finally, Dimglow was leaving. She was growing impatient with waiting, so maybe the universe was finally granting her some luck. The medicine cat stood to her paws which no longer shook as she peaked outside the den, eyes first landing on Robinpaw who was sat with his siblings. *The world better be kinder to him,* she thought before her eyes then drifted to Elysianlily who was secluded in a small part of camp with both her parents and brother. The four of them were talking about Zinniapool, she was sure of it. Everyone else was. *But that's okay.*

The medicine closed her eyes, taking in the scents of the medicine cat den, the aromas of all the herbs dancing around her nose pleasantly. She wasn't sure if this was all just a moment of clarity for her or she was delirious. Maybe the latter.

Zinniapool opened her eyes and allowed one shaky breath before she slipped out of an exit in her den to exclude any kind of attention to herself as she tasted the air, immediately finding the deputy's scent and following it.

She followed him for awhile, watching as he deftly weaved through the undergrowth, nearly weightless. Eventually he paused by the gully and she followed his gaze which outstretched over the turbulent crash of waves below. FallClan was beautiful, she supposed even ignoble cats could relish in it too.

"It's rude to stare." He finally spoke out into the abyss, his voice echoing against the other side of the pass. The medicine cat remained quiet for a moment, going over her options until she revealed herself.

"Seems trivial in comparison to your transgressions." She answered vapidly, head lightly tilting to the side. Dimglow met her gaze, something unreadable painting his face. Complacency maybe?

"I don't know what you were expecting, Zinniapool. You do fascinate me, however. I thought those travelers truly were full of it, but I'll admit I wrong. And you were right. I can only imagine how *frustrating* that is for you."

"Extremely." She answered, hesitation lacing her voice. She wasn't expecting this conversation, but it was elucidating to know she wasn't wrong about him. But he wasn't wrong, it was more than frustrating.

Her clan was never going to believe her, and they both knew it.

"So what are you going to do about it?" He asked, his words taunting and venomous, hiding behind his cultivated bearing. She stared at him, eyes wandering from the deputy to the deep incline of the gorge, deputy, deep incline, deputy, deep incline.

He picked up on this quickly, following her gaze back and fourth until finally, yellow met yellow in something nearly cathartic.

As soon as he was hurling himself towards her, Zinniapool felt herself breaking from the trance-like state that had taken over, feeling the full affect of the fight or flight. She dodged his attack, quickly noticing her back was facing the drop. She quickly eyed it past her shoulder before twisting around to see extended claws going for her cheek and she was falling to the ground, rolling in the mud from the recent downpour. *What in StarClan's name was she doing?*

The medicine scrambled to her paws, tail lashing back and fourth feverishly as she dodged his next attack and sent one of her own, but it was ineffective. The deputy gave her a deprecating chuckle, making some insulting comment that she didn't bother to hear.

Dimglow started approaching her once more and she stepped back in result, ignoring the pierce in her cheek as she felt her back paws stumble a bit as they met the edge of the ridge, looking behind her shoulder and gazing down at the tumultuous water below, eyes widening slightly as she met his far too satisfied gaze.

She was always told your life would flash before you eyes when death neared, but it didn't for her. Absolutely nothing except a race of thoughts, only having a second to decide on one out what seemed to be a thousand.

She just needed to accept it, maybe she would during the fall. She hoped so.

Zinniapool grabbed the deputy's scruff as he finally pushed her over, teeth grinding down as an ear splitting yowl echoed out and they were both free falling. While Dimglow continued to yowl and hiss and scream, Zinniapool just watched the setting sky as it grew father and farther away from her. Just like the prior morning, the sun was a deepening red, cascading steaks of faded vermillion clouds coating the diluted orange canvas of the sky.

Stunning.

That was her final thought before everything went black.

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Death isn't painful.

It was quick.

Zinniapool opened her eyes, adjusting to her surroundings. She looked around wearily, head cocking to the side as she stepped forward.

She was back in the forest.

Below her was a blooming daisy. She stared at it dubiously, yellow eyes narrowing on the white flower as she went to paw at it, recoiling as she watched her paw go straight through it without tampering the little flower at all.

"I told you to conceal it, Zinniapool." A familiar voice cooed, one that made the medicine freeze. Zinniapool looked up to meet those eyes that seemed to shine with the force of all the light in the world, panicked and rueful.

"Ravenrose." She spoke breathlessly, stepping back cautiously as she looked beyond the sable StarClan she-cat as she noticed three other starry felines, hardened looks on each of their faces.

"I'm sorry, I really am. I tried to convince them, but they've made up their mind." The previous medicine cat apologized, stepping back as she faded into nothing. Zinniapool could feel herself begin to panic as she quickly met the eyes of the trio of new StarClan cats who approached her.

"I have done nothing wrong." Zinniapool began quickly, eyes darting from each of the unconvinced cats before her. "*I have done nothing wrong*." She repeated, this time with more conviction.

The three looked at each other before looking back towards her, the one in the middle stepping forward, a demeaning expression coating his face.
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"Your soul is tampered, Zinniapool. We cannot, under good conscience, allow you into StarClan."

The medicine shuddered a gutted cry involuntarily, looking at them, her mouth opening to plead but the words got caught in her throat, so instead she just stared helplessly.

What was going to happen to her? Where was she going to go?

Suddenly she felt her body contracting, knocking her off her paws. She looked up, soliciting any kind of help from the three before her but they just watched with apathetic stares. The medicine let out a deafening scream as little x's begin to carve deep within her skin and her eyes began to shine brilliantly as the forest around her began to die. The leaves disintegrated into bare limbs, the sky turned dark and foggy and the daisy wilted before her very eyes.

Suddenly, the pain ebbed away and the StarClan cats faded from her new plane. Zinniapool looked around the desolate copy of her forest, a lingering sensation of dread following her everywhere she went, sparing her no mercy as she dawned upon her new horrid reality.

Here she would rest until the living's memory of her began to evanescence, a place crafted from her own mind, her own personal condemnation that was bathed in the feelings of horror she had felt.

Alone and denounced.

This was her afterlife.

epilogue

Generation after generation passed, and cats later refused the salvation of StarClan were sent to Zinniapool's crafted new plane as punishment. It grew tedious after awhile, greeting each new vile resident. Murderers, dictators, nonconformists, the list went on.

She watched leaders rise and fall. Anguish took over the clans time and time again from the same mistakes that no one ever seemed to learn from.

Zinniapool found it pious after awhile, eventually growing to resent StarClan for their sense of moral superiority and hating her own clan in turn for dismissing her all those moons ago. The cat she used to be was fading away over the hundreds of moons she resided in the place she had settled upon calling the Dark Forest, and with it, soon she would too.

But she had crafted this plane, made it from her own terror-stricken mind. Perhaps StarClan did have a right to fear her, but this could've been avoided.

Zinniapool was perched upon the rupturing version of the Dark Forest's Highledge, her dimmed yellow gaze staring down at the three expecting felines before her. Hollyhaunt, who was sentenced for his betrayal to FallClan. Bunnypaw, an apprentice who was far smarter than any warrior tripled his age. He'd devised some kind of massacre a few leaders back, left FallClan in ruins. And finally, Treefrost. The deputy who had killed his own leader. *How impatient.*

Since she was fading away, the Dark Forest would need a new anchor, and she had decided she would allow the three to fight until one was left vanquished. Perhaps excessive, but she had nothing to prove, and she hadn't in moons.

"This is quite the scene." A tepid voice echoed and Zinniopool lifted her head as she stared upon the newcomer, an exasperated expression tainting her face as she rolled her eyes.

Swanflutter.

"Don't you have some con of sorts, or have you gotten bored terrorizing everyone?" Zinniapool retorted, trying to hide her contempt as the lightly-colored gray feline before her chuckled and settled beside her.

"I thought you'd be gone by now." Swanflutter ignored her question, her formidable green stare wandering over each of the anticipating cats below them. "A shame you're still here."

"I have to find a new anchor."

"This is quite the conspicuous way to go about it." The gray feline spoke flatly, but Zinniapool could tell she seemed slightly intrigued by the way her eyes flickered faintly.

"I deserve to have fun before I officially bite the dust." The former medicine cat spoke, matching the same apathy as the con artist beside her. Silence fell between them until Swanflutter finally looked at her, making the tabby shuffle slightly. Something about the gray feline left everyone a little unnerved.

"What do you think happens next?"

Zinniapool pondered the question, always just assuming that once you faded, you just ceased to exist. But deep within her memory, one conversation resurfaced. Something about all matter existing within a multiverse of many planes, and that matter never being destroyed. That must mean she had to go somewhere?

"Wherever I goes next, wherever my energy is stored furthermore," she paused for a moment in thought, "I hope the cat I once was will be restored. I can hardly remember a fragment of who I was all those moons ago, but it was good. It was warm. It was love."

"Don't tell you've gone soft, you were just beginning to impress me." Swanflutter feigned hurt, growing satisfied by the tabby's growing irritation.

"You really are heartless." Zinniapool retaliated, eyes meeting the demoralizing eyes of her counterpart who scoffed in response.

"You aren't one to talk, not anymore." Swanflutter countered as her eyes flickered back towards the three cats waiting for Zinniapool's command. "I said this to my daughter so I'll tell you as well; in the real world, the actions you made were the actions you consciously decided to pursue. There is no one to blame but yourself."

"We're not in the real world anymore, so no Swan, I don't blame myself. I was good, and because of something StarClan didn't care to understand, I was wrongly punished and condemned. Excuse me if I'm just a little bitter." Spat Zinniapool, her ecru gaze glaring vividly now despite gradually fading. "And you want to know the worst part? My family will never know what happened to me. They'll never know how evil Dimglow was. They just... they'll never know, and my legacy will always be hidden behind their memories of me being crazy or delusional. In my final moments, I was a hero to my clan. I brought them deliverance and yet I still ended up here. It's unfair."

"You are right. I'm sorry."

"No you're not."

Swanflutter chuckled at that, teasingly flicking her tail towards the other molly. "You're right, I'm not."

Zinniapool just stared at her for a few moments, losing interest in the conversation as she swatted the other feline away and stood to her paws, the three before her standing in suit. She was ready to leave this place behind her, this life behind her.

So if she wanted to allow herself a little entertainment before that happened, she would.

Who would she have to answer to anyways?

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Swanflutter!!

After a year, this is finally finished. The epilogue and the two chapters before it, I stayed up all night to write and finish and they are rushed and horrible, trust me I know. It took everything in me

not to scrap this story entirely but I always told myself I would never do that.

Mind Over Matter was always meant to be a shorter story, but I ended up taking so much more out than I had planned because I simply didn't have it in me to write it. I was so excited for it initially, and while I still love the characters, I grew out of the story.

In another world, a more motivated me gave this story the justice it deserved.

But now I can finally move onto better fics that are much higher in quality (Grim Hollow sequel!!), but for those of you who stuck around and read this, thank you so much. <3 It genuinely means a lot to me!